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A Commentary on Plato's *Lysis*

By

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To my father and mother

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a detailed study of the *Lysis*, Plato's dialogue on friendship. One of the most important distinctions in politics (at least traditionally) is the one between friend and enemy. However, one cannot fully appreciate friendship as a political problem without first investigate its importance as a personal problem, hence the object of this thesis.

The study of any Platonic dialogue is immensely challenging and in that the *Lysis* is no exception. To get the most from these dialogues one must approach them with an open mind, a mind that wishes to learn. This means that one should neither be dogmatic nor complacent regarding the arguments. This is what I attempt to do with the analysis of this dialogue.

I deal with the *Lysis* as a living drama in which *everything* in it counts. And, in the spirit of this, I not only examine Socrates' arguments as carefully as possible (e.g., what he does and does not say, to whom, and why), but also I carefully examine the responses of his interlocutors. Though by the end of the dialogue we do not get an adequate answer to *our* question, 'what is friendship?', we do recognise why it is one worth asking.

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INTRODUCTION

"Friendship also seems to be the bond that holds communities together, and Lawgivers seem to attach more importance to it than to justice; because concord seems to be something like friendship, and concord is their primary object – that and eliminating faction, which is enmity. Between friends there is no need for justice, but people who are just still need the quality of friendship; and indeed friendliness is considered to be justice in the fullest sense. It is not only a necessary thing but a splendid one. We praise those who love their friends, and the possession of many friends is held to be one of the fine things of life. What is more, people think that good men and friends are the same."

Aristotle

The *Lysis* can be divided into three distinct but unequal parts, the divisions between them being marked by two private arrangements that Socrates makes (one with Hippothales and the other with Lysis). In the first part (203a-206d), Socrates is invited to enter into a new palaestra. A preliminary conversation with Hippothales reveals that he is in love with a young boy called Lysis. Upon further examination, Socrates apparently concludes that Hippothales is unwise in love matters. In order to remedy this problem Socrates offers to show the passionate lover an example of "what to say in conversation or what to do so that someone might become endeared to his favourite" (206c). Arranging for Socrates himself to converse with Lysis will supposedly provide an opportunity for this demonstration.

In the second part (206c-211d), Socrates, having entered into the palaestra, engages in a brief conversation with Lysis and his friend, Menexenus. The master of the gymnasia soon interrupts this conversation by calling on Menexenus to join him. This provides Socrates with the opportunity to converse with Lysis alone. The conversation ends up "humbling [Lysis] and drawing in his sails" (210e). Socrates here gives the impression that he has accomplished his task of demonstrating to Hippothales how he should approach his beloved. However, the fact that Hippothales was in "agony and disturbed by what had been said" (210e) suggests otherwise. The return of Menexenus offers Socrates another reason to stay in the palaestra; for the 'humbled' Lysis wished Socrates to do unto Menexenus what Socrates did unto him. Socrates accedes to this request. This marks the second private arrangement in this dialogue.

The third part (211d-223b) is dominated by an explicit enquiry concerning friendship. Most of this part consists of Socrates' examination of Menexenus; however, it also includes a relatively short examination of Lysis

(213d-215c). This third part can, in turn, be divided into five distinct sections. In the first section (210e-213d), the reader encounters the question of how much of a part does emotion play in determining who is a friend. In the second section (213d-215c), Socrates investigates with Lysis whether or not 'like is a friend to like'. It is here that the question of good and bad first arises, and continues from this point forward to be of importance to the understanding of friendship. This section ends with Socrates reintroducing the role of utility in a friendly relationship, a topic which is then pursued by Menexenus. In this short third section (215c-216c), Socrates examines (and quickly dismisses) the idea that friendship can be formed on the basis of opposition or 'opposites'. In the fourth section (216c-218c), Socrates, speaking as a "diviner", introduces the concept of 'the neither good nor bad', Using this characterisation, Socrates investigates his novel idea of 'the neither good nor bad' being the friend to the good. However, as it turns out this too is short lived. Socrates begins the fifth section (218c-222e) by raising doubts regarding the previous conclusion. Here the reader encounters the question of whether friendship is sought for its own sake or for the sake of something else. Moreover, Socrates briefly examines whether or not what is akin can be a friend. With that, the dialogue ends, apparently without reaching a satisfactory answer as to who or what is a friend.

So, what is this dialogue all about? Almost three fifths of the dialogue deals directly with the topic of *philia*, which (one can argue) justifies the dialogue's traditional subtitle, "On Friendship". But does that mean that the dialogue is about friendship in particular (a special human relationship involving two or more individuals)? Or is it about friendly love in general? The provisional assumption in this thesis is that the *Lysis* is indeed primarily about human friendship. Not that this assumption is unproblematic, but it is

based on the following considerations: First of all, the second part of the dialogue begins with Socrates' very short inquiry about Menexenus' and Lysis' own friendship (207b-d). Second, at the end of this second part, Socrates leads Lysis to accept the problematic claim that the only friendship possible is the utilitarian one between the wise and the unwise. Third, the dialogue's third part begins with Socrates' supposed boyhood dream of acquiring a friend. This desire of Socrates is what leads to the somewhat lengthy discussion of *philia* between the philosopher and these two young friends, Menexenus and Lysis.

What further complicates this question is the ambiguity of the related Greek word *philon*, which can serve as either a noun or an adjective. As a noun this word almost always denotes a 'friend,' and as an adjective it almost always denotes 'dear.'[1] Friendship, one generally presumes, requires reciprocal love. In this case one loves (*philêi*) one's friend (*philos*), where *philos* is understood in an active sense (i.e., 'to be a friend of'). However, not everything people love (*philein*) are necessarily friends. For one can love (*philêi*) something which he considers as dear (*philos*) *to* him, without having the presumption that the beloved thing (*philoumenou*) is itself a friend in the active ('human') sense. Thus one can talk about lovers of horses (*philippoi*), lovers of wine (*philoinoi*), and lovers of gymnastics (*philogymnastai*), people who consider these things as dear to them (but not as friends *of* them).

Aristotle, early in his account of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, seeks to clear away any confusion that might be caused by his use of

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[1] David Bolotin, *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship*: An Interpretation of the *Lysis*, with a New Translation (Ithaca and London: Cornell U. P., 1996) 55. All translations of the *Lysis* are based upon those of Bolotin. However, we will not always be faithful to his translation, especially when it comes to the choice of translating the ambiguous Greek word *philon*.

the language. He maintains that his discussion of *philia* will cover only the relationship among human beings (1155b17-1156a5). Later on he insists that "affection [*philêsis*] resembles a feeling, but friendship [*philia*] is a state. For affection can be felt equally well for inanimate objects, but mutual affection [*antiphilein*] involves choice, and choice proceeds from a [moral] [2] state" (1157b29-1157a34). Some such linguistic clarification is required by anyone attempting to provide a coherent account of 'friendly love', or so it would seem.[3] Yet the Platonic Socrates' account of *philia* in the *Lysis* does not explicitly do so. In the first place, Socrates, unlike Aristotle, makes no attempt to distinguish between *philia* as a feeling (friendly love) and *philia* as a state (friendship). Donald Watt outlines some further difficulties caused by Socrates' (or Plato's as Watt seems to prefer) ambiguous use of the language:

> [Plato] shifts to and fro, without warning or explanation, from the masculine *philos* to the neuter *philon*. More confusingly, he shifts from the active sense of the masculine noun *philos* ('friend (of)', i.e. 'he who loves') and the active sense of the masculine adjective *philos* ('friendly (to)', i.e. 'who loves') to the two respective passive senses ('friend (of)', i.e. 'who is loved,' and 'dear (to)', i.e. 'who is loved'); and from the passive of the neuter adjective *philon* ('dear (to)', i.e. 'which is loved') to the active sense of the same neuter adjective ('friendly (to), i.e. 'which is loved'). A further complication is caused by his use of both the masculine and the neuter to denote reciprocal friendship, i.e. 'friend' meaning 'he who/that which both loves and is loved'.[4]

Aristotle's teacher could hardly be insensible of the confusion caused by his use of the language. The fact that the question "what is *philia*?" is never raised in this dialogue about '*philia*' – and any attempt at an answer

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[2] The word moral here has been added by the translator; 'ethical disposition' would be an alternative reading. Unless otherwise indicated all quotations from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) are translated by J. A. K. Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London: Penguin Books, 1976).

[3] Throughout our analysis of friendship in the *Lysis* we shall keep in mind Aristotle's treatment of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This will help us better appreciate Plato's treatment of the subject.

[4] Donald Watt, *Lysis*. In the *Early Socratic dialogues*, edited by Trevor J. Saunders (Penguin

would require a clarification as to precisely what is being investigated – is an indication that Socrates' account is meant to be ambiguous. But to what purpose? Obviously an adequate answer to this question (which requires a comprehensive analysis of the *Lysis* as a whole) cannot be addressed in this short introduction. However, it is safe to assume that there is something peculiar about friendship (as distinguished from membership in a family or a community) that might partly explain Socrates' deliberate ambiguity in applying the term *philia*. As David Konstan observes, "[O]ne is born into family and city, but one makes friends: the Greek verb is *poieisthai* (middle voice, [meaning] "make for oneself"), which is employed also in the sense of 'adopt'."[5] It is this "making", and the choice that is implicit in it, which makes friendship unique. Therefore, it is safe to assume, understanding friendship requires not only an investigation of what makes it different from other human associations (*philia* as a state or disposition), but also it requires the investigation of what makes one person love another as a friend (*philia* as a feeling). The former kind of investigation is mainly political, [6] while the latter is philosophic. However, both kinds of investigations are inseparable. That is to say, one cannot fully understand what is friendship (as a social-political phenomenon) without understanding the emotion of friendly love (a psychological phenomenon). This point will become clearer through the examination of the dialogue as whole.[7]

Books, 1987) 140.

[5] David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 55.

[6] We use the word political in a broad sense, as that which deals with everything human.

[7] It will prove helpful to pay attention each time Socrates makes a switch in the definite article (if any) of key Greek words (such as friend, enemy, love, hate, good, bad, etc.). This will assist in identifying when a term is meant to be understood as part of a human relationship (for example, when the masculine definite article is used it usually means "he who is a friend"); and when a word is meant to be understood in the abstract, or universal sense (for example, when the definite neuter article is used it usually means "that which is a friend"). See Bolotin p. 57, and Watt p.

The remainder of this introduction offers a few brief observations about some aspects of the setting as well as some important themes in this dialogue.

For the most part, Socrates is shown conversing with two young boys (Lysis and Menexenus), while a group of older youth (including Hippothales and his friend Ctesippus) listen attentively. The reader should take note that the young boys and the youths present two different points of view, each of which bear on one's understanding of this dialogue. The distinctiveness of these perspectives comes about as the result of these two groups' difference in age, experience in life, and their relative dependency on their families. This analysis of the dialogue shall point out some of the more obvious resulting differences in their opinions. It is through contrasting these two general points of view (as well as seeing how Socrates presents the questions that expose these differences in opinion), that one can better appreciate what the philosopher means to show, or accomplish.

Passionate love (*eros*), as distinct from friendly love (*philia*), is also an important theme in this dialogue. The *Lysis* begins with a brief discussion about passionate love, and it continues as a background consideration. Socrates, who claims to be wise only in love matters (*erotika*; cf. *Symposium*, 177d, *Theages*, 128b) enters the palaestra in order to teach an erotic lover how he should approach his beloved. This passionate lover is present throughout Socrates' conversation with the young boys, listening intently. And by the end of the dialogue it becomes obvious that the passionate, erotic lover has a stake in how one understands the friendly love of friendship.

The importance of family and of filial love (especially of a father's love for his child) is also subtly emphasised throughout the dialogue. In the beginning of the dialogue a point is made about Lysis' family's nobility, reputation, and vast wealth; and one of the first questions that Socrates asks the two boys is whether they dispute about their families' nobility. A good part of Socrates' conversation with Lysis is focused on what Lysis' loving parents do or do not allow him to do. As will become obvious through the analysis of the dialogue, filial love, along with *eros*, present two contrasting standards by which one can judge both friendly love and friendship itself.

Finally, attention must be paid to the subject of wisdom in this dialogue. It figures several times in the philosopher's discussions with the boys. After all, it is on account of his wisdom that Socrates was asked to join the young men in the palaestra. And by the end of the discussion, it becomes apparent that it takes wisdom in order to recognise one's true object of love. Moreover, there are hints throughout the dialogue about the tension between philosophy – *philo-sophia*, the friendly love of wisdom – and poetry, and their respective relationships to the city. Indeed, one of the most important questions in the *Lysis* has to do with Socrates' apparent friendship to Athens. We see this archetypal philosopher going out of his way – literally – to spend time and converse with the young. Is he doing this out of his obligation as a citizen of Athens; or is it an act of personal friendship; or is it simply a manifestation of his own magnanimity? Perhaps the answer to this question will become clearer through greater understanding of the meaning of friendship, and of what makes something dear.

(ANA)LYSIS

"A heart full of an overflowing sentiment likes to open itself. From the need for a mistress is soon born the need for a friend. He who senses how sweet it is to be loved would want to be loved by everyone; and all could not want preference without there being many malcontents. With Love and friendship are born dissensions, enmity, and hate."

J. J. Rousseau

I. Self-Regard in Eros:

In what may be seen as an act of friendship (for there is no other apparent reason), Socrates is sharing with us – or whomever he is narrating this 'dialogue' to – the details of an encounter he had with a group of young men and boys. "I was on my way," he tells us, "from the Academy straight to the Lyceum." He does not explain to us what he was doing in the Academy, or why he was heading to the Lyceum. He tells us that he was walking "along the road outside the wall and close under the wall itself." [1] As he approaches the little gate near the spring of Panapos ('all-seeing'), the philosopher encounters a group of youths, two of whom he names: Hippothales son of Hieronymus, and Ctesippus of Paeania. Hippothales, seeing Socrates approach, engages him in conversation, asking him "where are you on your way to and where from?" Upon hearing Socrates' answer (i.e., from the Academy to the Lyceum), he issues an invitation to join them in the palaestra, promising Socrates that it will be worth his time. Hippothales shows no interest in knowing what Socrates was doing in the Academy or why he was going "straight to the Lyceum". Instead, he urges Socrates to come "straight" to them, and provides an incentive for the philosopher's joining them: the palaestra is filled today with good-looking boys who pass their time in discussion.[2]

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[1] The Athenians constructed this wall to protect them from their foreign enemies. Moreover, both the Academy and the Lyceum are outside of it. As such, it is interesting how Socrates, in his journey from the Academy to the Lyceum, takes a road that is as close as possible to the city; it is as if Socrates, in the middle of his journey, cannot, or does not want to, completely separate himself from Athens. This image might be seen as raising an important question about the nature of Socrates' attachment to the city. There is a very helpful analysis of this problem by Leo Strauss in his essay, "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*" (see *On Tyranny*, p.199-200).

[2] That Hippothales thinks this offer will please Socrates is reflected by the fact that he appeals once to Socrates love of speech (204a) and twice to Socrates supposed love of the sight of beautiful young boys (203b, 204a). Moreover, by the dialogue's end, Hippothales demonstrates

After being informed that this is a new palaestra, Socrates asks who teaches there? The teacher turns out to be a "companion . . . and praiser" of Socrates, a certain Miccus.[3] We are not told what Miccus found praiseworthy in Socrates. Nonetheless, Socrates, as if to reciprocate, affirms with an oath that "the man is not an inferior one, but a capable sophist" (204).[4]

Since Socrates and Miccus appear to be on friendly terms, Hippothales once again extends his invitation. Socrates, however, insists that he "would be pleased to hear, first, what terms [he is] to enter on and who the good-looking one is" (204). By asking about the "terms", Socrates is perhaps enquiring if it would be to his advantage to accept this apparently friendly offer. Whatever the case, Hippothales chooses not to address the first part of Socrates' question. In response to the second part, he maintains that each one "has his own opinion about who [the good-looking one] is" (204b). When Socrates insists on knowing Hippothales' opinion on this subject, the latter blushes. This Socrates takes as a sign that Hippothales is deeply in love. Socrates' question and Hippothales' response, therefore, reminds us that there is some connection between what one loves and what one thinks is, or praises as, beautiful (cf. 216c8-9).[5] Yet this raises a curious point: if indeed Lysis is the most beautiful boy (by the judgement of so many people), why is it that only Hippothales "has his mind on the boy more

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that he is more of a lover of sight than a lover of listening (*philêkoos*). Socrates eventually accepts this invitation, but as we will see his decision is based on what he heard, not on what he was promised to see.

[3] Perhaps this is a subtle indication of the difference between a flatterer and a friend; for one would expect Socrates to know of the new palaestra if its teacher Miccus were truly his friend.

[4] Bearing in mind Socrates' low opinion of sophists as depicted throughout the Platonic corpus (especially the *Republic*), one can appreciate how equivocal this praise is.

[5] This is not to say that beauty is simply 'relative' (all in the eye of the beholder so to speak). However, since no one can be indifferent to beauty, it is understandable how a passionate lover can be unwilling to admit that his beloved might be less beautiful than another.

than the others do" (205b-c)? At this point, Socrates claims that he is inferior and useless in other things, but that he has a 'divine gift' which allows him quickly to recognise "both lover and beloved" (204c).

Playfully indignant at what he sees as Hippothales' uncharacteristic show of modesty, Ctesippus steps forward and reveals the name of Hippothales' beloved. Out of the desire to further embarrass his companion, Ctesippus informs Socrates of Hippothales' disgraceful behaviour as a lover. According to him, Hippothales does three dreadful things: in his speech about Lysis (dreadful); in his writing about Lysis (more dreadful); and in his singing about Lysis (most dreadful).[6] It is easy to imagine why his companions find Hippothales' speeches dreadful, especially if he (as Ctesippus claims) does not allow a moment to go by without reminding everyone around him of how much he loves Lysis. Likewise, taking Ctesippus at his word that Hippothales does have an "astonishing voice," one can easily imagine what makes his singing dreadful (indeed most dreadful). This, however, makes one wonder what it is in Hippothales' poetry and prose writing that makes it more dreadful than his speech (cf. 205a7-8)?[7]

Socrates, however, chooses not to respond to Ctesippus' teasing assertions, instead suggesting that Lysis must be quite young since he (Socrates) does not recognise his name. Ctesippus tacitly confirms this, explaining that the boy is still known mainly as the eldest son of his very well-known father, Democrates of Aexone. Having been told who Lysis' father is, Socrates declares that Hippothales' love is "noble and dashing in every way" (204e). Though he does not say why this is so, Socrates' praise

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[6] There is an irony here (presumably unintended by Ctesippus): the term 'dreadful' (alternatively, 'terrible') is *deinos*, which also means 'clever' (cf. *Apology*, 17b).

may reassure Hippothales that his love is nothing to be ashamed of. Then, assuming the role of a 'love expert', Socrates asks Hippothales to relate the things he says to his companions in order that he may judge whether Hippothales understands "what a lover needs to say about his favourite to him or to others" (205a).

This question serves to reminds us of a least three quite different rhetorical situations in which a lover speaks about his favourite: speaking about one's favourite to others when the favourite is *not* present; speaking in public to one's favourite, or to others about him when he *is* present; and finally, speaking to one's favourite in private. What Ctesippus claims Hippothales always does presumes the first situation (cf. *Phaedrus*, 257c5-257d). This would seem to serve at least two purposes for Hippothales: it solicits sympathy from his friends (cf. *Symposium* 182d-183e); and informs any of his friends who may be interested in the "beautiful" Lysis not to compete for this favourite (and hence, risk violating their friendship with him). Indeed, Hippothales' praise, regardless of its alleged dreadfulness, appears to have accomplished at least this purpose of proving to his friend, Ctesippus, that he (Hippothales) "is a lover and . . . has his mind on the boy more than the others do" (205b-c). The second situation is where one would expect the lover to attempt to impress his beloved by distinguishing himself from those present (cf. *Euthydemus*, 300d; *Lovers*, 133a). The third situation is one in which a lover may truly say private things that a boy could *not* tell to others (cf. 206c1-2; also cf. *Symposium*, 217b). For some reason Socrates only focuses here on the second of these three situations, as shall soon be seen.[8]

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[7] We shall very shortly deal with this problem.

[8] Perhaps, in keeping with the ostensible topic of this dialogue, Socrates wishes to focus our

Hippothales admits that he is in love with Lysis, but denies that he makes poems or writes prose about his favourite. He does not outright deny that he makes speeches or compose songs about Lysis, though perhaps he means this to be implicit in his first denial. In any case, it is interesting to see that what most incensed Hippothales is Ctesippus' accusation that he wrote poetry and prose in praise of Lysis. Perhaps conscious of his poor poetic gifts, Hippothales is aware that nothing can expose this as would written proof. This denial prompts Ctesippus to declare that Hippothales is "not healthy . . . [but] raving and mad" (205a). These are, of course, the qualities normally associated with men in love (cf. *Phaedrus*, 231d).

Socrates assures Hippothales that he is not asking to hear any of his verses or songs (implying that he suspects there are such), but rather he wants "the thought" in order for him to know the manner in which Hippothales approaches his favourite (205a-b). The purpose behind this request is not clear. At first look, we and the young men presume Socrates to be inquiring about the effectiveness of Hippothales' approach to love-matters: does he say the right kinds of things which a 'good lover' needs to say in order to impress his favourite? If so, one wonders how a plain-spoken summary can do justice to the evaluation of Hippothales' approach as an effective lover (cf. *Phaedrus* 234e-235a). In other words, provided it is tasteful, we are typically more impressed by *how* someone praises something, rather than of *what* he actually praises (cf. *Symposium*, 177b-c). As such, we judge a clever lover as someone whose love poetry is really 'poetic' (which is precisely what Socrates does not want to hear). One

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attention on the particular situation of the meeting between one's friend and one's favourite in some 'social setting'.

begins here to suspect that the philosopher has a different reason for demanding the lover's thought from that which we first assumed.

Perhaps out of shame, Hippothales declines to provide the evidence Socrates solicits, and instead challenges Ctesippus to answer Socrates' question. Ctesippus readily rises to the occasion. He twice describes Hippothales' poetry and songs as ridiculous; for they are, according to Ctesippus, both unerotic and traditional. Hippothales' thought is unerotic because he "has nothing private to say which a boy couldn't tell" (205c). His thought is traditional because Hippothales repeats what the whole city sings about Lysis' father and earlier ancestors (i.e., their wealth, horse breading, and victories in athletic competitions). According to Ctesippus, this is the sort of things which old women talk about (i.e., not what men inspired by love make up themselves). Ctesippus' critique of Hippothales, then, presents to us two possible kinds of 'love-praise' (one championed by him, the other by Hippothales). Ctesippus believes that good praise should be both creative and erotic, and this is what most would regard as the superior kind of praise (cf. *Symposium* 198d-e). On the other hand, Hippothales' praise, though perhaps truthful, seems both conservative and unimaginative, and as such (according to Ctesippus) inferior. Now, one would expect the 'love-expert' to discuss these two kinds of praise (pointing out their respective strengths and weaknesses for example), perhaps suggesting a better way of praise. As we soon see, however, Socrates' critique of Hippothales' praise is part of an overall critique of 'love-praise' in general. That is, it also applies to what Ctesippus thinks of as the proper kind of praise.

Socrates agrees with Ctesippus that Hippothales' manner in approaching his favourite is ridiculous, but for a different reason. Hippothales is ridiculous because he is "composing and singing a song of

praise about [himself] before [he has] won the victory" (206d). Doubtless perplexed by this charge, the lover denies that it is about himself that he composes or sings.[9] Socrates replies "You don't suppose so, at any rate" (205d), and then at Hippothales' request, he explains what he means by his allegation.

The philosopher's argument can be divided into two parts. First, the consequences of praise for the one who praises; second, the effect of praise on the one praised. Concerning the first, Socrates begins by arguing that these songs "are directed most of all toward [Hippothales]. For if [he catches his] favourite, and he's of this sort, then what [Hippothales] said and sung will be an adornment to [him] and a real song of praise, just as if [he] had won a victory in obtaining such a favourite" (205e). Socrates does not mention here any of the more obvious reasons behind the lover's desire to speak to others about his favourite (to solicit assistance or sympathy from his friends, for example). Instead, he depicts Hippothales as a rash lover, who, confident of his victory, boasts about the qualities of his favourite.

Yet, on the surface at least, this picture of Hippothales as a 'rash lover' does not seem to fit with his actions in the beginning of the dialogue. For Hippothales blushes twice at the mere hint that he is in love, and, despite Ctesippus' claim to the contrary, he never once mentions the name of his favourite to Socrates (cf. 204c7-9). He gives no hint that he is confident of 'victory'. What, then, could be Socrates' purpose behind this apparent distortion of Hippothales' character?

Though this picture might not be accurate, Hippothales seems to share something with this 'rash lover'. For his blushing, as well as his desire to hide his poetry from Socrates (who, unlike Ctesippus, is not Hippothales'

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[9] Of course by this same denial he admits that he *does indeed* compose and sing.

peer), shows that he is not impervious to the opinions of others (especially his superiors, cf. *Symposium*, 216b).[10] And, despite the fact that he is supposedly "far along the way in love already" (204b), his beloved's opinion is not the only one Hippothales cares about.[11]

Socrates then warns Hippothales that:

> [If your favourite] escapes you, the greater the praises you have spoken about your favourite the greater the fine and good things [*kalôn te kai agathôn*] you'll have been deprived of, and you'll be thought ridiculous. Therefore, whoever is wise in love-matters [*erôtika*], my friend [*ô phile*], does not praise his beloved [*erômenon*] before he catches him, since he fears how the future will turn out. (205e-206a)

Now, one can concede here that a *boastful* lover would seem ridiculous to others if his beloved escapes him. However, it is not obvious why his loss of the fine and good things (which we can assume refer to the beloved's qualities) should be proportional to his praise. To begin to understand what Socrates means here, we need to recall some observations about praise (especially 'love-praise').

A *just* praise, one might argue, should extol only the actual virtues of the thing praised (nothing more and nothing less; cf. *Symposium*, 198d). However, especially with lovers, this is almost never the case. For it can be safely said that men in love are seldom, if ever, a good judge of their beloved's character. When imagination takes hold of them, they begin to exaggerate already existing qualities; or attribute non-existent beautiful qualities to their beloved; or even change those qualities which otherwise might not seem so attractive and make them beautiful (cf. *Republic*, 474c-475a). As such, it seems reasonable to assume that those who believe in their

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[10] Cf. *Rhetoric*, 1384a21-37.

[11] Moreover, this picture seems to be Socrates' implicit critique of Ctesippus' approach to love matters. For it is the 'bold' Ctesippus who seems to be disturbed by his friend's lack of poetic skills, and who pushes his friend to compose imaginative poetry.

own praise run the risk, if they lose their beloved, of being doubly disappointed at the loss of all the fine and good things which they imagined the beloved to possess.[12] Therefore, one can see why Socrates suggests that Hippothales take into account his ignorance of the future, and especially the uncertainty implicit in erotic love (perhaps in contradistinction to friendly love). But is not this a risk that every passionate lover is exposed to? To put this question differently: assuming this to be genuine advice by Socrates, it does not appear to be of a sort that one can realistically expect to be followed by a passionate lover. Rather, it is advice that would presumably be more effective with those who seek to be *wise* in love-matters rather than those who are actually *in love*.[13] For even if a lover can stop from publicly praising his beloved, it is far less likely that he can stop thinking about that beloved (i.e., praising this beloved to himself).[14] This is yet another reason to suspect that what Socrates is doing here is something more than simply giving 'friendly advice' on love.

In case Hippothales had the idea that this rule applies only to praising one's favourite to others, Socrates switches to another side of the problem: the effect of praise on the beautiful. The beautiful, we are told, "are filled full with proud thoughts and bragging whenever someone praises and exalts them" (206a).[15] Hippothales, perhaps out of his own experience, agrees with

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[12] We can see further support of this observation in Socrates' wording of this critique. If the lover catches his favourite, then the lover's poetry will be a praise of him only if the beloved is of this sort. However, if the beloved escapes the lover, the lover will be disappointed, whether or not the beloved is of this sort.

[13] The case seems, as Bacon suggests, *"That it is impossible to love and to be wise."* Francis Bacon, "Of Love," in *Essays* (Prometheus Books, New York: 1995) 28.

[14] Just as when Socrates first saw Lysis, he thought to himself that Lysis is not only beautiful but also good (207a).

[15] Proud thought is a term often used to describe those who carry within their soul the seed of either tyranny or philosophy. As we will see through Socrates' conversation with Lysis, the latter indeed harbours some proud thoughts.

Socrates that praise can make the beautiful arrogant, and further agrees that "they become harder to capture, the greater braggarts they are" (206a). To illustrate his point, Socrates uses the analogy of a hunter. As Hippothales readily concedes, an inferior hunter "is someone who scares away his prey as he hunts, and makes it harder to capture" (206a). Similarly, an inferior lover-as-musician is someone who fails to beguile, and instead makes savage, through his speeches and songs. Yet, this analogy does not prove that praise should not be used as a hunting tool or as a taming device. All it shows is that there are poor hunters and poor musicians.

As may be clear by now, Socrates' 'dispraise' of praise is problematic.[16] Clearly Socrates cannot be negatively disposed towards praise, or be unaware of its charming powers. Praise is charming because it appeals to what people love most: themselves.[17] Indeed, if rightly done, praise or flattery are among the most effective ways of gaining people's trust and affection (perhaps surpassed only by deed; cf. *Apology*, 32a3). For we, as Aristotle argues, generally "feel friendly towards those who praise such good qualities as we possess, and especially if they praise the good qualities we are not too sure we do possess" (*Rhetoric*, 1381a-b).[18] But what, then,

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[16] The dialogue, as a whole, shows us how praise can be very useful. Socrates himself seems at times very generous in his praise. For example, he praises the youths for passing their time with speeches and for their willingness to share these speeches (204a); he praises Hippothales' love as being "noble and dashing in every way" (204e); he tells Lysis that his body is noble (209a); he praises Lysis and Menexenus' friendship (212a); and he leads Menexenus to believe that he (Menexenus) is an expert in friendship.

[17] As Plutarch argues: "there is no way that a person in love with himself can make a fair and impartial assessment of himself. . . . This lays the domain of love or friendship wide open to the flatterer; self-love provides him with a perfect base camp against us, since self-love makes each person his own primary and chief self-flatterer, and makes it easy for us to allow someone else under our guard – someone else to testify to corroborate and support us in our beliefs and aspirations." (Plutarch, "How to Distinguish a Flatterer From a Friend", in *Plutarch's Essays*, translated by Robin Waterfield; Penguin Books, 1992) 61.

[18] Unless other wise indicated, all translations of the *Rhetoric* are those of W. Rhys Roberts in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard Mckeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

explains Socrates' paradoxical advice that Hippothales should not praise before he 'catches,' since it is obvious that praise facilitates catching? Whatever else, the fact that Hippothales does not object to this advice may suggest that Socrates' criticism did touch upon something which Hippothales cares about: his own wish to be praised. For Hippothales does not wish to be thought ridiculous by his companions, nor does he wish to be thought a poor hunter by his favourite. And perhaps more importantly, Hippothales does not wish to be hurt. It is not surprising, then, that Hippothales would be more than willing to accept Socrates' advice of not making himself "liable to all these things because of [his] poetry". And that he "wouldn't be willing to agree that a man who harms himself through his poetry is ever a good poet; for he is harmful to himself" (206b). Whether or not this is Socrates' opinion, the fact that Hippothales finds this "very unreasonable" confirms our opinion about the lover's self-concern. As Bolotin puts it, Hippothales "is led to admit as his opinion that the end by which poetry should be judged is, or at least must include, the advantage of the poet himself"[19]

Hippothales now, more than ever, is interested in Socrates' company. He asks Socrates to tell him "what to say in conversation or what to do so that someone might become endeared [*prosphilês*] to his favourite" (206c). Socrates claims that it is easier to show than to speak as to what one should say to his beloved. As such, Socrates (the wise in love-matters) asks the permission of the lover to allow him to converse with his beloved.[20] Hippothales, who apparently trusts Socrates, eagerly grants his permission. What is more, he quickly puts an elaborate plan in place to make sure that

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[19] Bolotin, 77.

[20] It is important to note here that Socrates is silent about the second part of Hippothales' request:

Socrates will indeed be able to converse with Lysis: if Lysis' love of listening will not do the trick, the pressure of Lysis' friends will be sufficient. Now that Socrates has a clear purpose for entering the palaestra, he decides to join the young men inside. This marks the end of the first part of the dialogue.

At this point, it is not clear how this first part of the dialogue relates to its main theme of *philia*. The word 'friend', for example, was mentioned only once (as Socrates' term of endearment to Hippothales; 206a3), while that of friendship or friendly love (as a reciprocal feeling among human beings) was not mentioned at all. Indeed, the sub-title aside, a cursory reading of this part may give the reader the impression that the dialogue is about erotic love. After all, it is an erotic lover who invites Socrates to join him and his friends inside a palaestra. And, apparently, it is in order to help the lover become endeared to his beloved that Socrates agrees to join. However, a more critical reading of this part reveals a different story. As seen, the particular questions which Socrates asks of the lover, as well as his problematic critique of praise, shows that Socrates is more interested in displaying the selfish motives behind the lover's praise, than he is about evaluating Hippothales as a lover. In fact, self-interest (or self-love) seems to be the major theme of this part.[21]

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about what to do.

[21] Apart from what Socrates' advice reveals about Hippothales, the drama of this introduction gives further evidence of this observation. After all, Socrates was walking alone, apparently in a hurry, 'from the Academy straight to the Lyceum.' When he was invited to enter into the palaestra, where he can *share* in the speeches (with the bonus of having the company of good-looking people around him), Socrates declines until he hears if the terms for his entry are pleasing to him. Finally, Socrates goes inside the palaestra under his own terms. As we shall see, this theme pervades the dialogue.

"The only goods that it is costly to be deprived of are those one believes one has a right to. The evident impossibility of obtaining them detaches one from them. Wishes without hope do not torment us. A beggar is not tormented by the desire to be a king. A king wants to be God only when he believes he is no longer a man."

J. J. Rousseau.

II. The Selflessness and Selfishness in *Philia*:

Socrates and Ctesippus go jointly inside the palaestra. Those already inside were celebrating the festival of the Hermaea. The boys and the youths are mingling in the same place (apparently something that only happens on special occasions).[1] Socrates informs us that the sacrifice had been offered and the rest of the religious ceremony was almost over (206e). There were two groups of boys playing with knucklebones. The larger group was playing outside in the courtyard, while the smaller one was playing in a corner of the dressing room. As such, there was separation after all, but not due to convention (i.e., that older and younger boys should not be in the same place), apparently due instead to the personal preference of the players. Lysis was observing the play of the smaller group, while his friend Menexenus was participating in the play of the larger one. Lysis was crowned with a wreath, presumably a sign that he has taken part in the sacrifice (cf. *Republic*, 328e). It seems that Lysis has performed his religious duties before going to play (unlike Menexenus, who had to do them at the request of his gymnastic master; 207d). Socrates maintains that Lysis "stood out by his appearance as someone worth being spoken of not only for being beautiful, but because he was beautiful and good" (207a).[2] Does not Socrates' comment suggest that appearance does tempt us to judge the substance?

In a quiet corner, Socrates and Ctesippus sit and begin to converse. We are not told about what. But upon noticing them, Lysis becomes visibly perplexed: on the one hand, his love of listening makes him desire to join the

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[1] According to a modern source, the Hermaea was "a festival celebrated at Cydonia, in the island of Crete, at which the slaves enjoyed complete freedom, and were waited upon by their masters. . . . Other feats in honour of Hermes were held at Athens in the gymnasia, at Pheneos, Tanagra, Pellene, etc. (*Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities*, 1965, p. 798).

two conversing; but on the other hand, his sense of modesty (or perhaps politeness) prevents him from joining without an invitation. Socrates informs us that Lysis remained in this perplexed (*eporei*) state "for a while" (207a). For some reason, Ctesippus does not immediately attempt to fulfil his friend's plan. Perhaps he was following Socrates' advice of playing 'hard to get' with Lysis (cf. 206a12-13). Fortunately for Lysis, however, Menexenus happens to enter from the courtyard (207b). Upon seeing both Socrates and Ctesippus, he promptly joins them. This fortunate development was sufficient to make up Lysis' mind to join them also. Once Lysis takes his place beside his friend, others also gather, and Hippothales screens himself behind the group and approaches to where he supposes Lysis will not see him, "for he fear[s] to incur his hatred" (207b). From this point forward, Hippothales' participation in the dialogue will be limited to his facial expressions as reported by Socrates.

Socrates begins his conversation with the two boys by addressing Menexenus (with whom Socrates is apparently already acquainted). He first asks which one of the two boys is older. Menexenus answers that they dispute about this matter. From this answer Socrates somehow presumes that they must also dispute about which one of them is of nobler family. Menexenus, again, affirms this assumption. Since there is dispute about these matters, which (at the very least) shows that each boy is self-regarding, Socrates suggests that they must also dispute about "which one is more beautiful" (207c; arguably one of the most self-regarding things). At this point both boys laugh. This common laughter, which does not deny that they do dispute about this matter too, can be a strong indication that their rivalry is friendly. This leads Socrates to announce that he will not ask them which

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[2] Or gentleman-like.

one of them is wealthier, for they appear to be friends (*philô*). Since the boys affirm that they are friends, Socrates explains why he did not ask them who is wealthier: for "the things of friends [*philôn*] are said to be in common,[3] so [they] will not differ in this respect, if indeed [they] are speaking the truth about [their] friendship [*philias*]" (207c). Though it is doubtful that the boys do not dispute about this matter, it is commonly understood that money and material possessions are supposedly not an issue among friends. [4]

Socrates informs us that he was intending to question the young boys as to which one of them "was juster and wiser," but in the middle of doing so, "someone came up to fetch Menexenus, saying that the gymnastic master was calling him" (207d).[5] Now that Menexenus must leave the group (briefly, as it turns out), Socrates has the opportunity to converse with Lysis alone – which, we should recall, was supposedly the reason why he went inside the palaestra in the first place. The issue of wisdom will soon be raised, but that of justice will be almost forgotten.[6]

With Menexenus gone, Socrates now changes the subject entirely. Seemingly out of the blue he tells Lysis that he supposes the boy's father

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[3] This is one of two 'sayings' in this entire dialogue which Socrates does not out-right challenge, or claim that he does not understand (216c; cf. 212e, 214b, 214d).

[4] As Crito once put it: "what reputation would be more shameful than to seem to regard money as more important than friends?" (*Crito*, 44c).

[5] This intended question, about who is more just of the boys, seems strange, given that they supposedly agree that the things of friends are in common. Based on this agreement one would suppose that the consideration of justice would be unnecessary. However, this does not seem to be Socrates' opinion. Perhaps he doubts the sincerity of their claim. Or perhaps he wants verification that it indeed is of no issue to them on account of their being friends. Yet thought about more deeply, another interesting possibility emerges. Justice does not merely apply to the boys' relationship with each other, but extends beyond the circle of this friendship. As such whether or not they dispute about this question may offer some insight as to the quality of their friendship (e.g., is it similar to the supposed friendship among the wicked, or is it similar to that among good men).

[6] Aristotle observes that "Between friends there is no need for justice, but people who are just still need the quality of friendship; and indeed friendliness is considered to be justice in the fullest sense" (*NE*, 1155a24-b8).

and mother love (*philei*) him very much, and as such wish for him to be as happy as possible.[7] Lysis affirms Socrates' assumption. Perhaps wishing to clarify to what Lysis understands by this, Socrates asks him: "[I]s a human being happy, in your opinion, if he were to be a slave and if it were not possible for him to do anything he desired?" (207e). Lysis' negative answer implies that he understands that happiness presumes some freedom to do what one desires. Indeed, this tends to be most people's view about happiness.[8]

To these two assumptions, Socrates adds a third one: "Then if your father and your mother love [*philei*] you and desire [*epithumousi*] that you become happy, it's entirely clear that they exert themselves [*prothumountai*] so you should be happy" (207e). This would seems almost too obvious to require stating. As Leo Strauss suggests, "an attachment to beings which prompts one to *serve* them may well be called love of them."[9] He further observes that "the concern with, or care for, what is one's own is what is frequently meant by love."[10] In one sense, then, love is the willingness to serve one's own (understood as the beloved person or thing).[11]

Based on these three assumptions, then, Socrates now concludes: "They allow you, therefore, to do what you wish [*boulei*], and they don't scold you at all, and they don't prevent you from doing what you desire

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[7] This is the first is mention of the verb *philei* in this dialogue. Though in the Greek language parents' love to their children is normally referred to in terms of *storgê* (cherish), *philia* can also be used without causing confusion.

[8] We will be reminded later on in the dialogue that it is possible "sometimes to desire beneficially, and sometimes harmfully, and sometimes neither" (221b). If nothing else, this clearly shows that Socrates does not share this ordinary opinion about happiness.

[9] Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*: Revised and Expanded Edition, edited by Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press, 1991) p. 198.

[10] Strauss, 199.

[11] Of course, if happiness was simply the freedom to do what one desires, then this itself does not explain why people would wish to have children, for the sake of whom they have to exert themselves (which implies suppressing some of their desire).

[*epithumêis*]?" (207e).[12] Lysis emphatically denies this, insisting that his parents do indeed prevent his doing very many things. Obviously this is the expected answer. For it is true that parents' love of their children is a primary example of love of one's own, a love so strong that a parent may even be willing to dedicate his life to his children. However, it also exemplifies the responsible kind of love: in rearing their children, parents are more interested in the overall, long term happiness of their offspring than in the immediate gratification of their children's desires. This readily explains why Lysis' parents would prevent him "in very many things" (207e) from doing what he desires, despite their desiring his happiness. However, feigning surprise, Socrates begins to question Lysis about this matter. He provides five different examples of things Lysis "must", according to Socrates, have some control over.

In the first example, Socrates asks Lysis if he would desire "to ride in one of [his] father's chariots and to take the reins during a competition" (208a), whether his parents would prevent him? Surprised at this question, Lysis answers that they would indeed prevent him. And as is evident by this answer, Lysis does not seem the least bothered by the fact that he cannot fulfil this desire (should it occur to him, as likely it hasn't). Lysis no doubt understands that because of his young age and lack of skill, he not only could damage the horses, but also injure or kill himself in attempting to drive a chariot. To guide a spirited team during a race, Democrates requires

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[12] We should note Socrates' usage of the two terms wish (*boulei*) and desire (*epithumêis*). While he appears to use those two terms interchangeably in the earlier part of this discussion with Lysis (207d10-209a5), in the latter part of this discussion (209a11-210b) he will focus exclusively on *wish* (Bolotin, 91). Since *desire* has, apparently, an important role in friendship (221d-222a), then in our analysis we shall pay particular attention to the subtle difference between those two terms as suggested by Socrates' own usage. As we will see, Lysis has some intuitive appreciation of this difference, though for the most part he does not pay attention to it.

a man who is both physically fit and exceptionally skilled. It is a full time job that requires a great deal of training for both horses and horseman, who must have the freedom to do "whatever he wishes with the horses" (208a). Moreover, it is part of his skill to judge when a risk is worth taking during a race and when it is not. In other words, a skilled charioteer will not allow his desire to win the race (for which he would be honoured and rewarded) to over-rule his prudential judgement, taking an undue risk which can injure him or the horses. But also, he must not be so timid as to neglect every chance of winning the race. Obviously, acquiring both the necessary skill and judgement requires much experience.

In the second example, Socrates further asks Lysis if his parents allow him to rule over, and even beat, a team of mules. Apparently astonished by the 'silly' question, Lysis indicates that they would indeed not allow him to do that either (208b). Again, Lysis' response indicates that, on the surface at least, he finds what his parents dictate to be reasonable, realising as he does that he lacks the requisite physical fitness and the skill required to manage such large and occasionally stubborn beasts.

In this case, however, Socrates asks about the muleteer's social status: is he a slave or free. Upon hearing that he is a slave, Socrates mildly taunts Lysis: "Even a slave, it seems, they consider worth more than they do you their son, and they allow him to do what he wishes but you they prevent" (208b-c).[13] There are at least two important observations that need to be made here, as they have some bearing on the conclusion of this part. First, the muleteer, though a slave, must have freedom to deal in whatever way he sees fit with the mules. Again, like the charioteer, his freedom is guided by what he knows to be the proper handling of the animals under his control.

However, this is different from having the freedom to do whatever he pleases with the mules (e.g., leaving them in the stable all day, to say nothing of selling them). Second, it is clear that when it comes to the handling of mules, a muleteer is more *useful* to Lysis' parents than is Lysis. But it is also the case that children are more *valued* by their parents (cf. 219e). If nothing else, this last point should remind us of the distinction between something being useful or beneficial and its being loved or dear (cf. 210c).

In the third and central example, Socrates asks Lysis if his parents allow him to rule over himself? Apparently surprised at the question, Lysis answers: "How could they entrust me with that?" (208c). Thus he confirms what Socrates doubtless knows: that there is an attendant, who is a household slave, that rules over Lysis. Perhaps one of the most notable functions of attendants is protecting boys from the corrupting influence of others (especially of pederasts; cf. *Symposium*, 183c-d). For young boys by nature tend to be trusting, and, as we clearly see in this dialogue, they can easily be persuaded by outrageously fallacious arguments. However, at least here Lysis' trust seems to be in its right place. For Lysis seems certain that there can be no reason for his parents to entrust him with his taking care of himself. This clearly shows how aware he is of his dependence upon his parents. However, the ironic Socrates keeps taunting Lysis by declaring: "It is dreadful [*deinon*] indeed . . . that one who is free should be ruled by a slave" (208c).[14]

Upon Lysis' admitting that a slave attends him on the way to school and back, Socrates now asks about his teachers. In this fourth example,

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[13] We shall soon examine the possible purpose behind this and other playful taunting by Socrates.
[14] Note that Socrates uses *deinos* here, which can also mean clever. This seems to be intentional,

Socrates does not ask whether or not the teachers are hired, but merely whether they rule over Lysis. The boy emphatically affirms that they do. At this point, Socrates comments that "that's a great many masters, then, and rulers whom your father voluntarily sets over you" (208d). Throughout his short discussion with the boy thus far, Socrates has been asking about what Lysis' *parents* give him freedom to do. But in summing up his comment about the first four examples (all of which involve activities outside the home), Socrates attributes only to the father this controlling of his son's life. He further adds that the father does it voluntarily (or 'purposefully'; *hekôn*). Now, though, Socrates turns explicitly to the mother's rule over her son. In the fifth example, Socrates asks Lysis if, when he goes home, his mother gives him liberty to do what he wishes inside the house. Does she allow him, for instance, to play "with the wool or with the loom, when she is weaving?" (208d). Here Lysis laughs, insisting that "not only [his mother] prevents him, but also [he] would be beaten if [he] touched it."(208e). This laughter on the part of Lysis shows his recognition of the playful nature of Socrates' questions.[15] Yet despite this laughter, one wonders if Lysis does not (at times) get frustrated with this 'overwhelming' control of his life. Indeed, Lysis' certainty that he would be beaten if he defied his mother's authority might suggest that he has, at times, attempted to rebel against his parents' authority.[16] Thus, perhaps Socrates' playful taunting strikes a responsive chord in Lysis.

Whatever the case, taking an oath by Heracles (who killed his own children in a fit of anger), Socrates facetiously inquires whether Lysis has done anything unjust to his father and mother? Lysis replies with a vow by

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for what may seem dreadful to the young can be considered clever by the elderly.

[15] This is in contrast to Lysis' seriousness regarding Socrates upcoming examination.

Zeus (who had to fight his unjust father) that he did no such thing. To this Socrates asks:

> But in response to what do they so dreadfully [or cleverly; *deinôs*] prevent you from being happy and from doing whatever you wish, and support you through the whole day always being a slave to someone and – in a word – doing almost nothing that you desire? So it seems that you gain no advantage from your possessions, great as they are, but everyone rather than you rules over them. Nor, it seems, do you gain any advantage from your body, which is so noble [*gennaiou*] but even this is shepherded and tended by another. But you rule over no one, Lysis, and you do nothing that you desire. (208e-209a; translation slightly altered to clarify the syntax)

Lysis quickly answers that he has not yet reached the age where he can be free. He assumes, then, that in time he will reach the mental and physical maturity necessary for him to gain control over his own life and property. This is a reasonable assumption, supported perhaps by what his parents keep reminding him of: that once he reaches a certain age he will be able to do as he wishes. But this answer does not satisfy Socrates. Nor should it, since it leaves unclarified what 'coming of age' actually means. What is the real connection between 'being older' and 'being free'? In order to uncover the substantial answer, Socrates begins to ask Lysis about those things which his parents, at the present time, *do* give him freedom to do.

Reading, writing, and playing music are three areas which Lysis apparently has complete control over. If Lysis' parents want anything to be read or to be written, Lysis will be the first one in the household assigned such a task. Supposedly, he can read and write whatever he wishes first. Similarly, he can play music as he sees fit. However, we realise that this does not mean that Lysis can do whatever he may please with these things. At the very least, Lysis has to be restricted to the rules of intelligible writing and reading. Thus he cannot really write whichever letter that pleases him

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[16] Bolotin, 89.

first and whichever one second (cf. 209b). Similarly, Lysis must aim, in his tightening or loosening of the strings of his lyre, to harmonise its tones. But, as is partly seen in his next answer, there is no reason to assume that Lysis thinks otherwise. That is to say, he would not wish to do something in the wrong way, after being taught how he should do it correctly. This is similar to what he expects the charioteer, the muleteer, the attendant, and his teachers to do.

Comparing those things which Lysis' parents prevent him from doing with those things which he has freedom over, Socrates asks Lysis to provide him with the cause of this difference. Lysis, somewhat hesitantly, replies that he has control over those things which he understands, while he is prevented from doing those things which he does not understand. Therefore, the examples of reading, writing, and playing music suggest that understanding is the basis of freedom. There are a number of interesting things about those subjects which Lysis does sufficiently understand. First, he must have learned those subjects from some teacher(s). Second, his knowledge about those subjects can be easily judged and appreciated, to some extent even by those who are less learned about those matters. For, at the very least, Lysis' parents can judge for themselves whether that which is being read is intelligible or not; and similarly they can judge whether or not the music being played is harmonic. Third, Lysis seems to presume that the man who understands has no incentive to harm others with his knowledge. If Lysis knows how to read, write, and play music, then he can only benefit his parents. As such, these examples illustrate for us how Lysis believes one becomes 'thoughtful' and how such a one can become beneficial to those dear to him.

Now that Socrates and Lysis have uncovered the importance of understanding as a pre-requisite to freedom, the philosopher provides the boy an opportunity to see the limitations of this view. Socrates will provide six different possibilities (three in Athens and three in Persia) for determining what "superior thinking" entitles one to do. In the first possibility, Socrates proposes that as soon as Democrates considers his son's thinking to be better than his own "he will entrust both himself and his own things [to Lysis]" (209c). Lysis answers that this is what he supposes will happen. Yet for this to come to pass, Democrates would first have to recognise that his son is indeed wiser than him; and this runs counter to the common expectation that only with age comes wisdom. Second, Lysis' father has to trust that his son will not harm him once he gives him such powers, and instead use his prerogative for the father's benefit, or at least their common benefit. According to Lysis' understanding of 'thought', these two conditions can be easily fulfilled. In reality, however, this is not likely. For even if a father is willing to give up a share of control over his affairs to his son (who will eventually inherit his father's estate), he would not be inclined to give up control over himself and his own freedom, especially given the relation between happiness and freedom posited earlier. But why did Lysis not see the problem with this particular point? Perhaps mesmerised by the emphasis on thought and understanding (as if that were the only relevant consideration), Lysis may think just as his father controls his (Lysis') life in the present (for his own good, as he realises), then in the future the possibility will exist for him similarly to rule his father's life (if, that is, he becomes wiser than his father).

Taking this possibility one step further, Socrates next suggests that Lysis' neighbour has the same standard concerning [Lysis] as [Lysis' father]

does" (209c). As such, once this neighbour considers Lysis' thinking about household management to be better than his own, he will entrust his own house's management to Lysis. Again, Lysis' one-dimensional understanding of what 'entitles' a person to 'take charge' permits him to accept this possibility. Lysis believes that his neighbour will be thoughtful enough to see Lysis' 'superior thought', and naive enough (although Lysis does not actually see it as naiveté) to trust that this arrangement will work to his advantage. Notice that though the neighbour supposedly shares with Lysis' father the same standard regarding Lysis, Socrates does not mention anything about the neighbour entrusting himself to the 'thoughtful' Lysis. Nor does it occur to Lysis that there are very significant differences in his relationship with his father and that with any neighbour.

The third possibility has to do with the political management of the city. Socrates proposes that the Athenians "will entrust their affairs to [Lysis], as soon as they perceive that [he] thinks capably" (209d). To this suggestion, Lysis flatly and unqualifiedly responds in the affirmative. Socrates' wording of the question seems to suggest that the Athenians would be less particular about who manages their political affairs than Lysis' father and neighbour are about who would manage their household affairs. For the Athenians have only to "perceive" that Lysis thinks "capably" before they allow him to rule over them, whereas Lysis' father and neighbour would supposedly trust in Lysis only if they consider his thinking to be *better* than their own. There is no reason to believe that Lysis notices this reduction in the requisite qualification. Perhaps his imagination has been so inflamed by the prospect of one day being politically important that he is eager to agree. We have already seen how the whole city praises Lysis' family (205c-d), a praise that has likely reached Lysis. This public honour might help explain

why Lysis believes it will one day be easy for him to acquire control of the whole of Athens.

Now that Socrates and Lysis have surveyed what a man with sufficient understanding can expect to accomplish in familiar, civilised, democratic Athens, Socrates expands the horizon of action to include the traditionally hostile, 'barbaric' realm of Persia. Moreover, all the questions will be focused on who the Great King of Persia will see as more trustworthy, his own son or the wise. Again, Socrates provides three distinct possibilities of what understanding can supposedly accomplish.

Socrates begins this examination with a seemingly simple example:

> Would [the Great King] entrust his eldest son – the one who is going to rule over Asia – with permission to throw whatever he wished into the sauce while the meat was boiling? Or would it be us rather, if we should come to him and give him a demonstration that our thinking about food preparation was finer than his son's? (209d-e)

Socrates' point with this example is to emphasise still further the (supposed) all-importance of intellectual competence: even though someone might rule a great empire, that counts for nothing compared to culinary competence where food is concerned. However, there are a number of things we should notice here, though it is pretty clear that their significance is lost on Lysis. First, Socrates is reminding us that the Great King's son will eventually rule over all of the Persian empire. This is an important fact about monarchy that we should keep in mind as we examine the rest of the examples. That is, kings choose their own children to rule after them because they are *their* children (not necessarily because they are the best fitted to rule). Second, by mentioning the "eldest son", Socrates implicitly reminds Democrates' eldest son that he is also a beneficiary of traditional thinking which gives eldest

sons priority in controlling their fathers' estate. [17] Third, Socrates explicitly includes himself in the examples. As we soon see, compared with the previous three 'Athenian' examples, the 'Persian' ones are far more outrageous. Yet despite their outrageousness, young Lysis blithely takes them in stride. As he does not seem downright stupid, we can only assume that his sheltered, privileged life surrounded by friends, family, and servants, has provided little occasion to consider 'non-friendly' relationships.

At first blush, the cookery example seems straightforward, there being no good reason that a man who desires fine food would not wish to be served by the best cook in the world. This explains why Lysis easily accepts Socrates' suggestion. However, for it to be a practical possibility, the Great king, first of all, must trust that his Greek 'cooks' do not intend to harm him. Second, Socrates and Lysis cannot throw whatever they wish in the sauce unless it is to the Great King's taste (for he may dislike salty food, for example). There is no one right way in cooking that can appeal to everyone's taste; accordingly the 'knowledge' required in food preparation must include that of what appeals to the tastes of those one desires to please. Although Socrates does not refer explicitly to knowledge (or wisdom) in food-preparation (for he uses the term "finer thinking"), the lack of any distinction being made between technical skill and other kinds of knowledge may lead Lysis to believe that there is such a thing as wisdom in cooking.

The second example has to do with skills in the medical art. If the Great King's son were diseased in his eyes, then the first thing that the father would do is prevent his son (who is not skilled in the medical art) from treating himself. Then, if he assumes that Socrates and Lysis are skilled in the medical art, "even should [they] wish to open his [son's] eyes and

[17] As such, not only the Great King, but also Lysis has a stake in preserving this system.

sprinkle ashes inside them . . . [the King] wouldn't prevent them since he would consider [their] thinking to be correct" (210a). The first part of this example establishes the 'right' to prevent those who are ignorant from harming themselves. However, as this example indicates, this is done out of concern for the ignorant, not out of the desire to torment him. This reinforces the experience of Lysis: that all ruling is for the good of the ruled. Now, the practice of medicine, unlike that of savoury food preparation, pertain to matters of vital concern, epitomised by the health of our most important sense organs, and it cannot be readily judged based on harmless demonstrations. Accordingly, persuading the Great King to trust in the skill of Socrates and Lysis would likely be a good deal more difficult. [18] Lysis, in any case, sees no problem with this possibility. Moreover, he does not seem aware of the dire consequences they might face if they err in their judgement.

Having secured Lysis' agreement on the last two possibilities, Socrates now presents his third (and arguably the most outrageous) possibility. The Great King will entrust to Socrates and Lysis, "rather than to himself or to his son, everything else in regard to which [they] are wiser, in [the King's] opinion, than [him and his son] are" (210a). But for anyone who knows anything about politics, it is 'those wiser than themselves' whom the tyrant fears the most. Possessing great power, the tyrant is suspicious that others seek to deprive him of it – naturally presuming that anyone would change places with him if they could (cf. *Republic*, 344a-c). Again, Lysis does not see the problem with this possibility, and instead he insists that the King will "necessarily" follow this course of action.

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[18] We are unable to make much of the treatment with ashes except that it seems to be a very dangerous way of treating eyes.

Here one might wonder how Lysis, who seemed so reasonable about his parents' control, can be so naive as to accept so readily such 'unreasonable' arguments about the freedom and authority of the knowledgeable. The answer must be the simple fact that "Lysis is quite young" (204e1), and (as Socrates earlier interrogation revealed) has led a very sheltered life, ruled over in everything for his own good. And, as Aristotle observed, those who are youthful in character "have exalted notions, because they have not yet been humbled by life or learnt its necessary limitations; moreover, their hopeful disposition makes them think themselves equal to great things – and that means having exalted notions" (*Rhetoric*, 1389a31-34). In the beginning of his discussion with Socrates, Lysis made reasonable replies because he knew he could not do the things which Socrates asked him about. For example, he knew full well that it is impossible for him to guide his father's chariot during the race. However, having been 'set-up' to regard intellectual competence as the sole consideration, in the second part of his discussion with Socrates, Lysis easily accepts Socrates' arguments since he has had little or no exposure to the clash of interests that characterise political life. Indeed, the more Socrates' examples are divorced from Lysis' experience, the more he gets excited. For instance, as regards the examples of his father and his neighbour, Lysis' 'supposes' its truth; as regards the Athenian's affairs, Lysis 'does' believe its truth; and as regards the three examples of the Great King he answers with "clearly", "how could he not", "that is true", and "necessarily".

Socrates now concludes that he and Lysis will gain unlimited freedom in regards to those things in which they are prudent. They will derive great profits from those things, and no one – Greeks as well as barbarians, both

men and women – will voluntarily obstruct them. On the other hand, Socrates warns:

> [W]ith regards to those things in which we *don't* acquire good sense, no one will entrust us with permission to do what is in our opinion best concerning them; but everyone will obstructs us as much as it is in his power – not merely aliens, but even our father and mother and whatever may be more closely akin to us, for we shall derive no profit from them. Do you grant that this is how it is? (210d-c)

Lysis grants that this is so. But he does not notice a problem which Socrates implicitly raises: even as ignorant people, Socrates and Lysis will still have opinions about how best to do things. These opinions can be strong enough that others must use all their powers to obstruct Socrates and Lysis. [19]

At any rate, Socrates now asks Lysis, "Then will we be friends [*tôi philoi*] to anyone and will anyone love [*philêsei*] us in regard to those matters in which we're of no benefit?" (210c). Here we have the first association between friendship, love, and utility. Lysis emphatically denies the possibility. Yet in doing so, Lysis momentarily forgets about the 'non-utilitarian' basis of his parent's love for him, implicit in all their careful concerns for his health and happiness (to which he testified). This, of course, does not escape the ironic Socrates' notice, who, while removing himself from his 'partnership' with Lysis, tells him: "Now, therefore, not even your father loves you, nor does anyone love [*philei*] anyone else insofar as he is useless" (210c). Here, for the first time in a while, Lysis expresses some uncertainty by answering: "It doesn't seem so" (210c). What explains this hesitancy? On the basis of Lysis' own experience with his family, he is sure his father does love him, but he has also been made aware he is of only limited use to his father.

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[19] Indeed, this is one of two main problems that run through Socrates' six possibilities: how can the unwise appreciate the wisdom of the wise?

This points to the underlying issue that profoundly affects all six of Socrates' examples, and which Lysis has failed to appreciate: the natural love of one's own. As noted earlier, parents' love of their children is a primary example of this kind of love. However, as the term indicates, love of one's own includes not only love of kin, but as well love of things "that one has in any sense 'made' oneself".[20] As Leon Craig puts it: "The parent in each of us has a special attachment to the produce of one's body simply because it is one's own, an extension of the self one loves; and similarly, the poet in us prefers what one's soul recognises to be its own."[21] Thus, this perhaps sub-rational attachment is what makes it possible for someone (such as a father) 'selflessly' to serve another (such as his child). Yet it is this self-same passion which sometimes makes it very difficult to choose the best over that which is one's own. Allan Bloom observes that "the blood ties bind and have a morality of their own which keeps the mind from wandering freely over the world; they stand in the way of natural fulfilment. Men are usually torn between duty to their own and duty to the good."[22] Clearly, then, it takes an extraordinary kind of man to overcome such a strong natural predisposition. One suspects such men are very rare. For most people, the appreciation of wisdom stops when it threatens love of one's own. However, it is not surprising that young Lysis does not recognise this problem. For Democrates' son has of yet very little that can be called his own (cf. 208e8-

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[20] Leon Harold Craig *The War Lover*: A Study of Plato's Republic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) p. 238.

[21] Craig, 240. Indeed, we have seen a simple example of this in Hippothales' attempt to hide his poetry from Socrates. Hippothales kept composing and singing these poems in the face of all his companions' criticisms (205c-d). It was not until Socrates had 'proved' to him that all 'love-praise' is hazardous to the poet (206b) that Hippothales was open to Socrates' alternative approach to 'love-matters'.

[22] "Interpretive Essay" in *The Republic of Plato*. Translated with notes by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991) p. 385.

209a5). And though he loves his parents, he cannot feel the same intensity of love which his parents feel for him (cf. *NE*, 116215-28). [23]

Having persuaded Lysis that the basis for friendship is utility, Socrates sums up the argument as follows:

> Then if you become wise, my boy, all will be your friends [*philoi*] and all akin to you – for you will be useful and good. But if you don't, no one else will be your friend [*philos*] and neither will your father, nor your mother, nor your own kinsmen. (210d)

Note that, according to this statement, people will become friends and kin to Lysis because, in being wise, he will be both useful and good (that is, to them). Yet, seen from Lysis' perspective, then, why this should be the case? For if no one loves the useless, why would Lysis accept others' friendship unless they are also useful to him? The fact that Lysis does not object to Socrates' summation perhaps attests to his 'good nature'. That is, he sees no problem with the wise helping the ignorant. With that, however, we end up with two apparently inharmonious views about love: a utilitarian view of love, which indicates that one loves *only* what is useful (as per Socrates' summation); and an altruistic view of love which makes one willingly serve another despite the other's uselessness. Nonetheless, both views of love seem to share the idea that a friend is what is useful. For people will desire Lysis' friendship because he is useful, and Lysis will be a friend to them by being useful. Though utility might be of importance to friendship, in and of itself it cannot explain why people (such as the comparatively 'useless' Menexenus and Lysis) become friends to each other. This, and other obvious problems in the second part of the dialogue, set the stage for the more extensive treatment of friendship in the third part.

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[23] On that note, however, we should perhaps reflect on important fact which must make Lysis' friendship to Menexenus special to him: the fact that he was free to choose his best friend (cf. 206d5-6).

Socrates finishes his examination of Lysis with a seemingly rhetorical question: "Is it possible for someone to think big [*Phronein mega*] in regard to those matters in which he's not yet thinking [*phroneis*]" (210d). Lysis denies the possibility, asking, "How could he?" Socrates then reminds Lysis (who agrees) that since he requires a teacher, this means that he is "not yet thoughtful [*phroneis*]". Supposedly this means that Lysis' "thoughts are not [too] big [*megalophrôn*], if indeed [he is] still thoughtless [*aphrôn*]". The main problem with this argument is that Socrates has already shown that Lysis, despite his need of teachers, does indeed think big. For example, this is displayed in his wish to manage his father's and neighbour's households, in his wish to rule the Athenians, and more importantly in his wish to take control of even the Great King's affairs.

Be that as it may, Socrates gives his listener(s) the impression that he has accomplished the purpose behind his going into the palaestra: showing Hippothales "how one needs to converse with his favourite, by humbling him and drawing in his sails instead of puffing him up and spoiling him [as Hippothales supposedly does]" (210e; cf. 206c). Still, one wonders if, overall, Socrates' has truly humbled Lysis. Does not Socrates, on the surface at least, actually encourage in Lysis' grand thoughts of ruling? Can Lysis now be satisfied with lovers who can offer him anything less than the wisdom necessary to become the best (cf. *Symposium*, 218c6-218d5)? Is this what so bothered Hippothales' view, who (according to Socrates) seemed to be "in agony and disturbed by what [had] been said?" (210e). Or is he simply discomfited by having his favourite's limitations so publicly exposed? Whatever the case, the pitiful sight of Hippothales checked Socrates from committing the blunder of exposing him to his beloved. Though Hippothales has asked Socrates, in general terms, to give an advice

of "what to say in conversation or what to do so that *someone* might become endeared to his favourite" (206c), he wished that such an advice would be directly applicable to him. Socrates conversation with Lysis does not fulfil this objective. The fortunate return of Menexenus offers Socrates an opportunity to ease his friend's mind (cf. 222b2-3). But reflecting back on Socrates' examination of Lysis, we can see that the 'net effect' of the variously fallacious arguments is to confirm in the boy's mind that the single most important concern with respect to freedom, happiness, power, and friendship, is knowledge, and thus the pursuit of knowledge.

The return of Menexenus prompts Lysis to initiate a private (and friendly) conversation with Socrates. He wants Socrates to tell Menexenus what he already told him. We are left to speculate on why he wants this. Socrates, however, presents a counter offer: Lysis should tell Menexenus "everything clearly", and if he happens to forget anything Socrates will remind him of what he forgot. This requires Lysis to change his request. After assuring Socrates that he intends to do just that, he asks him, "But speak to [him] about something else, so [I] too may listen, until it's time to go home" (211b). It may be that Lysis – who supposedly was applying his mind to what Socrates told him – felt that there is something that went wrong during his earlier conversation with Socrates, and wanted the chance to listen to the argument once again in order to examine it more closely. Or, what seems more likely, he wants his 'contentious' friend to be similarly 'put in his place'.

Socrates accepts the second request but asks Lysis to serve as his ally "if Menexenus attempts to refute [him]" (210b); for Lysis must know, according to Socrates, that Menexenus is contentious. Lysis affirms this

'fact' about Menexenus, and admits that because of it he wants Socrates to converse with him. Playfully, Socrates accuses Lysis of wishing that he (Socrates) be made to look ridiculous. In response, Lysis insists, with an oath by Zeus, that he wants Socrates to converse with Menexenus in order to "chasten him" (210c). For the second time in the dialogue, Socrates claims that what he is being asked to do is not an easy task. According to Socrates, Menexenus is not only a "terrifying" (*deinos*) human being, but he is also the student of Ctesippus (who, as Socrates points out, is present here). It is puzzling why Socrates would make such a claim. Is he trying to excite the humbled Lysis' jealousy of his friend? If so, to what purpose? Whatever the reason(s) behind Socrates' ironic observation, Lysis demands of him that he should not "be concerned about anyone", and instead converse with Menexenus. Socrates for the second time agrees that he "must converse".

Either annoyed, or pretending to be, by Socrates' and Lysis' engaging in private conversation, Ctesippus complains: "why are you [two] feasting alone by yourselves and not giving us a share of the speeches?" (211c). Since this is a friendly gathering, Socrates affirms that he and Lysis must indeed share their speech with the others. As a preliminary to this 'sharing', Socrates falsely claims that Lysis has confessed to him that he does not understand something about the previous argument, "but he says that he supposes Menexenus knows, and he bids me to ask him" (211d). [24]

This concludes the second part of the dialogue. However, Socrates' narration leaves us puzzled regarding the relationship between the previous discussion and the up-coming one with Menexenus. First, Socrates refuses Lysis' request to repeat the conversation to Menexenus, but he accepts the

[24] Here again one is at loss to explain the purpose behind Socrates' apparent attempt to excite Lysis' jealousy.

invitation to talk about something else. Then he announces publicly that Lysis does not understand something about the previous argument, believing that Menexenus might – implying that he (Socrates) *is* going over the same thing again. But instead he seems to pursue something else. Whatever the purpose behind this confusion, one thing is clear: this will put both boys somewhat at ease. On the one hand, Menexenus, who must be flattered by his friend's supposed confidence in him, will (supposedly) have a chance to listen to the conversation which his religious duties prevented him from hearing. Lysis, on the other hand, is confident that Socrates, with this new conversation will humble Menexenus. Moreover, he must also be confident that he himself is better prepared for this conversation.

"Attachment can exist without being returned, but friendship never can. It is an exchange, a contract like others, but it is the most sacred of all. The word friend has no correlative other than itself. Any man who is not his friend's friend is most assuredly a cheat, for it is only in returning or feigning to return friendship that one can obtain it."

J. J. Rousseau

III. i. Who is the Friend?

Socrates begins his examination of Menexenus with a short account of his life-long dream: to have a friend [*philôn*]. If one were to take seriously what Socrates says here, one would be confronted with what seems a sad tale of a solitary man. Socrates, like any other man, has desires and, like any other man, he desires certain things more than others. [1] Different men desire different things, depending on what they see as beneficial or pleasing. Yet unlike what most men would desire (be it horses, dogs, gold, or honour), Socrates claims an intense desire to have a friend. In fact, "when it comes to the acquisition of friends [Socrates is] quite passionately in love [*erôtikôs*]" (211e). In order to emphasise for Menexenus the extent of his passion, Socrates affirms – rather strangely – that having a good friend is to him more desirable than "the best quail or cock to be found among humans" (i.e., in the world; 211e). Moreover, swearing by the god of friendship (Zeus), Socrates further affirms that he desires a good friend more than a horse or a dog. Finally, swearing by the Dog, [2] the philosopher insists that he "would much rather acquire a companion than the gold of Darius, and rather than Darius himself—that's the kind of lover of companions [he is]" (211e). Apparently he does not regard Darius as likely to become his friend. In any

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[1] This invites us to ask how does one rank his desires? There are at least two possible answers here. First, that pleasure is the only thing that makes a man desire one thing rather than the other. In that case, Socrates' desire for a friend is no more significant than another man's desire for gold. Second, that there are objective criteria (that which makes a human life complete, for example) by which one can rank one's desires. Of course, if such criteria exist, then one wonders what is in the desire for friendship that makes it of great importance to Socrates?

[2] According to Thomas West, 'by the Dog' "is an oath apparently unique to Socrates. He swears 'by the dog, the Egyptians' god' at *Gorgias* 482b; the dog may be Anubis, the mediator between the upper and lower world, whose Greek counterpart is Hermes" (Thomas G. West & Grace West, *Four Texts on Socrates* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U. P., 1984) 70. If that is true (and one should not lose sight of the fact that the dialogue occurs in the wake of the festival of the Hermaea, inside a palaestra, of which Hermes is its god), then the link between the upper and lower world (or the metaphysical and physical) may be of importance to the question of *philia*.

event, perhaps nothing can emphasise Socrates' intense passion for friends so well as does this last example. Although few would admit it, most people would rather have the gold of Darius (and better yet, be tyrants like Darius; cf. *Theages*, 125e-126a)[3] than have a good friend—all the more so if they do not know what a good friend truly can be. With money and power, one can enjoy a great many things: one can have the finest food and drink, hear the finest music, smell the finest perfumes, see the finest sights, touch the finest women, and be honoured. If one seeks the company of others for companionship and simply in order to avoid loneliness, the rich and powerful man will have no shortage of people who are more than willing to amuse him.[4] Judging by the way he lived and died, Socrates is obviously unlike most people. This brief testimony of Socrates' supposed life-long dream may suggest that he has a view of friendship that is unlike what most people think and believe friendship to be. However, since this (supposedly) has been the philosopher's dream since he was a boy, implying that there was something that struck him about friendship when he was still young – perhaps as young as Lysis and Menexenus – we might begin our investigation of this topic with an examination of the ordinary view of friendship.

Socrates claims that he is struck by Lysis' and Menexenus' friendship, which he sees as productive of happiness; for young as they both are, they "are able to acquire this possession quickly and easily" (212a). [5] Apparently

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[3] We should note that Socrates himself stops short from mentioning the desire to *be* a tyrant.

[4] This is one of the clear evidences in this dialogue that Socrates does not believe in the notion of the utilitarian friendship which was reached at the end of the second part of the *Lysis*. For based on that view, the Tyrant should be the most capable of making friends.

[5] According to Aristotle, "friendship between the young is thought to be grounded on pleasure, because the young are regulated by their feelings, and their chief interest is in their own pleasure and the opportunity of the moment. With advancing years, however, their tastes change too, so that they are quick to make and break friendship" (*NE*, 1156a16-b2). It has been pointed out that

this qualifies Menexenus as knowledgeable on the topic. Therefore, Socrates asks him:

> When someone loves [*philei*] someone, which one becomes a friend [*philos*] of the other, the one who loves [*ho philon*] of the loved [*tou philoumenou*], or the loved one [*ho philoumenos*] of the lover [*tou philountos*]? Or is there no difference? (212b)

Upon reflection, this seems a strange way to introduce the topic of friendship. Judging by the other Platonic dialogues in which Socrates investigates specific topics (such as justice, courage, beauty, piety, or moderation), one would expect Socrates to begin his investigation of this subject with the more straightforward question: what is friendship? In fact, this question is never explicitly raised in this dialogue "on friendship". Perhaps Socrates (or Plato if one prefers) wants to communicate something peculiar about people's understanding of friendship. Most people basically agree on what friendship is supposed to be. They see it as a special affection between two or more individuals. Such an emotional tie normally implies that friends should share things in common, confide in each other, enjoy each other's company, and help each other in times of need. If two individuals meet these criteria (regardless of other qualities), they are regarded, and regard themselves as friends. What is important here is not the essential goodness of the friend (that he be just, for example), but rather the sincerity of the friend's emotional attachment, which will make him want to do what is good (or, more accurately, what appears to be good) for his friend. As such, for most people the important question is not what is friendship, but rather who is (or what makes for) a good friend. Socrates will

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Lysis and Menexenus are perhaps the youngest interlocutors ever to participate in a Platonic dialogue (Bolotin; 67). Is it somehow especially appropriate that in this dialogue about *philia*, Socrates is conversing mainly with two interlocutors who are more regulated by their feelings than by reason.

soon expose the problems with the so-called friendship that is based simply on emotions.

His puzzling introduction provides three possible ways in which one can become a friend of another: the friend as the lover, the friend as the beloved, or it makes no difference. Before considering Menexenus' answer, however, one should take note of the following. The answer to Socrates' question seems to depend not only on how one defines friendship, but also on the basis whereby the lover values his beloved.[6] That is, it depends on answering two further questions. First, what is friendship? Second, why would someone love someone? Socrates will later deal extensively with the issue of the friend's usefulness (thus implicitly searching for the purpose of friendship). Moreover, he will posit the question whether friendship is something that is desired for itself or desired as means to some end (here, then, the answer will depend on how one defines friendship). However, in this preliminary introduction to his search for the friend (211d-213d), Socrates avoids any mention of the role of usefulness in friendship. This too is done, one can suggest, in order to examine whether or not emotion, in and of itself, is adequate for defining who is a friend?

In response to Socrates' question, Menexenus chooses the third possibility. Instead of clarifying what he means by this possibility, Socrates

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[6] The beginning of Socrates' question, "when someone loves someone" naturally invites the reader to ask: "why would someone love someone?" Aristotle, for example, argues that "there are three kinds of friendship, equal in number to the qualities that arouse them" (*NE*, 1156a6-23). These three kinds, according to Aristotle, are: friendship based on utility, friendship based on pleasure, and friendship based on goodness. Taking our cue from the end of the second part of the *Lysis*, let us assume that a friend is what is useful. As such, if someone loves another for who he is (like a father's love of his child), then the lover would be willing to be useful to his beloved (in this case the friend would be the one who loves). However, if someone loves another because he (the beloved) is useful to him, then the lover would see his beloved as *his* friend. Again if both lover and beloved are useful to each other, then both would be friends to each other. However, as we will shortly see, Plato's Socrates (like Aristotle after him) teaches that friendship and love may have much firmer grounds than simple utility.

gives an interpretation of what he supposes Menexenus means: both become friends of each other if only one loves the other. The problem with this third possibility, at least as understood by Menexenus, is that it makes love at once necessary and unnecessary for friendship. That is to say, it is necessary that one loves the other, but unnecessary for the beloved to love the lover. Why did Menexenus choose this possibility despite its being contrary to normal expectations regarding friendship?

Menexenus, partly because of his young age, does not appreciate the problem of unrequited love in a 'friendly' relationship. His parents, after all, must love him unconditionally, and he loves them in return in his youthful, heedless way. Like Lysis, he probably believes that loving someone means that the lover desires his beloved to be as happy as possible; and since happiness supposedly means the freedom to do what one desires, then the lover would be willing to do what the beloved wants. As for peers, given that playing is what a child loves to do most, for a child a playmate is synonymous with friend. Some sort of reciprocity is simply taken for granted, two children cannot 'play together' if only one is playing. As such, Menexenus does not see a problem with "both [lover and beloved] become friends of each other if only one loves the other." The one makes an effort to please; the other benignly tolerates the pleaser. That is to say, as long as the one is willing to do what the other desires, both lover and beloved can become friends. This might also explain (albeit not fully) why Lysis initially accepted Socrates' notion of the friendship between the wise and the unwise. It's worth noting here that though Menexenus has not thought through the implications of the third possibility, he did not assume that the beloved

would be emotionally indifferent to his lover.[7] However, he might have assumed (judging by his relationship with his parents) that it is not necessary for reciprocated love between lover and beloved to be equal. It is interesting to note here that those who see the true test of love as the lover's willingness to fulfil his beloved's desires, in effect share this 'childish' view of love and friendship. For them, friendship is sought because it is useful, and they expect benefit from a person who professes to be a friend.

Implicit in this way of thinking is that one puts oneself in the place of the beloved. Aristotle argues, for example, that "most people seem to want to be loved rather than to love, the reason being their desire for honour. . . . Most people enjoy being held in honour by those in authority because of their expectations; they think that they will get from them anything that they want, so they enjoy honour as a token of future favours" (*NE*, 1159a12-22).[8] Although most would say that reciprocity is important, what they really regard as most important is that other people love them. This emphasis on the self (on the importance of being loved) makes it very hard for us to consider 'objectively' our own part in friendship (our own 'obligation' to love, so to speak). We say 'objectively', because we should not rule-out the possibility that many people, who may feel a certain need for others, think that they love simply because they are emotionally attached to that which they need (cf. 219d). However, this emotional attachment can in fact be merely a manifestation of selfishness, derived from the desire to gain

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[7] This will be seen in Menexenus' quick acknowledgement, in response to Socrates' questions, of the unreasonableness of assuming that both lover and beloved are friends to each other in the case where the beloved may be emotionally indifferent to (or even hate) his beloved.

[8] Therefore, this introduction of the topic of friendship by Socrates prompts us to reflect on people's most elementary view of the basis of friendship: pleasure. In such a relationship, reciprocal feeling of *love* is not necessary so long as both parties are *pleased*. The lover will be pleased by being with his beloved, and the beloved will be pleased by having his desires fulfilled.

something from that which is said to be loved. Thus one can see how self-interest can taint the sincerity of the emotion of love.

This is important for two inter-connected reasons. First, the reader is reminded in this part of the dialogue that there is a wide range of emotional attachments that are expressed in terms of *philia*, from parental love to the love of wine. As we shall see, it is essential to distinguish when such a love is genuine (what makes it genuine) and when is it just a figure of speech. Second, Socrates will later argue that true friendship means loving one's friend for his own sake, not for the sake of something else (219d). It is helpful to keep this point in mind as one analyses Socrates' examination of Menexenus in this section.

Pursuing the role of love leads Socrates to ask the following question:

> Isn't it possible for one who loves [*philounta*] even to be hated [*miseisthai*]? For example, the opinion is held, I suppose, that even passionate lovers [*erastai*] sometimes suffer this from their favourites. For though they love [*philountes*] as much as possible, some of them suppose that they're not loved in return [*antiphileisthai*], and some that they're even hated. (212b-c)

This is the first of two distinctive examples which Socrates uses to focus attention upon the attitude of a beloved towards his lover. While here Socrates is speaking of the relationship between a passionate lover and his beloved, later on he will ask analogous questions about the relationship between a parent and his child (213a). The parallels between those two examples invites the reader to compare erotic (passionate) love and parental love. For whatever else, those two very different kinds of emotional attachments provide standards by which one can judge friendly love between two people. Therefore, by making such a comparison one discovers a number of interesting issues that bear on the understanding of friendship. [9]

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[9] The dialogue as a whole invites such a comparison between the apparent selfishness of passionate love (eros) and the apparent selflessness of parental love. For example, in his critique

Socrates here is describing the affection that the passionate lover has towards his beloved, not in erotic terms, but in terms of friendly love (*philia*). However, he is not necessarily himself asserting that a passionate lover manifests *philia*, for Socrates' account merely reports what "the opinion is". In fact by the end of the dialogue, he will obliquely raise this very question: is it possible "for one who desires and who loves passionately [*erônta*] *not* to love [*mê philein*] that which he desires and loves passionately [*erai*]" (221b).[10] By contrast, Socrates nowhere in the dialogue raises any problem with describing parents' love to their children in terms of *philia* (213a).

The example of the passionate lovers illustrates for Menexenus the possibility of one-sided love (where the beloved may not love, or even may hate his lover). This, then, precludes the third possibility as originally endorsed by Menexenus. What Socrates is searching for is a consistent account of friendship that applies to all cases. Menexenus' third possibility does not admit of such consistency; for how can two people become friends if only one loves the other, who does not love (or even hates) in return? Menexenus agrees with Socrates that there is something wrong in this case. Therefore, with some notable changes, Socrates repeats the first question:

> Then which of them is a friend [*philos*] of the other? Is it the one who loves [*ho philôn*] [that is a friend] of the loved [*tou philoumenou*] -- whether he is in fact loved in return [*antiphilêtai*] or whether he is even hated [*misêtai*] -- or is it the loved one [*ho philoumenos*], of the lover [*tou philountos*]? Or again, *in such a situation* is neither one a friend [*philos*] of the other unless they both love [*philôsin*] each other? (212c)

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of Hippothales' poetry Socrates has focused exclusively on how Hippothales' praise might harm him. In contrast, Socrates provide the example of the Great King going to great lengths in order to save his son's eyes (210a); he also shows how parents in general love their children whether or not the children reciprocate this love (213a); and of how a father regards his son as more valuable than all his other positions (219d).

[10] Although this question seems merely rhetorical, it is well worth considering.

Here Socrates makes explicit what was implicit in the first version of his question (that the beloved may not love, or even may hate his lover). Furthermore, he introduces a different third possibility: in order for two to become friends, they must both love each other. Menexenus, who perhaps has just learned not to give a hasty answer, cautiously accepts the modified third possibility. Socrates reminds Menexenus that "their" opinion has changed from what it was before:[11] "for then, if one were to love [*philoi*], they were both friends [*philô*], in our opinion; whereas now it is that neither is a friend [*philos*] unless they both love [*philôsin*]" (212d). Menexenus reluctantly agrees. Based on this agreement Socrates suggests: "nothing which does not love in return [*antiphiloun*] is a friend [*philon*] to the lover [*philounti*]" (212d). In this suggestion Socrates has switched the masculine form for friend (*philos*), which was the object of inquiry until now (212b-d), to the neuter form *philon*, which can mean either friend or something dear.[12] 'Dear' is a term that expresses, in a general sense, how a lover perceives his object of love. Indeed the term 'dear' is synonymous with the adjectival use of the term 'beloved'; by virtue of being loved, the beloved person is dear to the lover. 'Friend', on the other hand, is a term which, to the lover, carries with it certain expectations in return from that which he loves. At the very least, the lover expects his friend to reciprocate his love. A friend is necessarily dear, but not everything that is dear (i.e. loved) is necessarily a friend. Based on this distinction between friend and dear, one can see how

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[11] This is the first of at least twelve clear occurrences in this third part of this dialogue in which Socrates alludes to something which has been said previously (213c, 213e, 216e, 217c, 218b, 219b, 219c, 221d, 222b, and twice in 222d). And if we add the one at 210d, we will end up with at least thirteen occurrences in the whole dialogue. This suggests that Socrates has in his mind something more than the simple desire to embarrass his companion by reminding him of their previous conclusions. In this particular case (212d) what Socrates referred to as "their opinion", was in fact what he interpreted as Menexenus' opinion (212d).

[12] Bolotin, 57.

nothing which does not love in return is a *friend to* the lover, but that does not mean that nothing which does not love in return is not *dear to* the lover. However, Socrates for some reason seems to exploit the ambiguity of the word *philon* to give Menexenus the impression that what is friend and what is dear are perfectly synonymous.

By using *philon*, Socrates now incorporates in his investigation of who is a friend a wide range of emotional attachments (all expressed in terms of *philia*) in which the beloved cannot be capable of reciprocity:

> Therefore, those whom horses don't love in return [*antiphilosin*] are not lovers of horses [*philippoi*], and those are not lovers of quail [*philotuges*]; nor, again, are they lovers of dogs [*philokunes*], loves of wine [*philoinoi*], lovers of gymnastics [*philogumnastai*], or lovers of wisdom [*philosophoi*], unless wisdom loves them in return [*antiphilôsin*]. Or do each of them love [*philousi*] these things, although the things are not friends [*phila*]. (212d-e)

By using the condition that reciprocity is essential to friendship, Socrates questions whether the quality of 'dearness' in the object of love can be independent of its own feeling of love. If the answer to this question is that it can't be independent, then one has to search for another term that may describe one's attachment to objects which are incapable of reciprocating love. On the other hand, if what is dear is independent of its feeling love in return, then one has to accept the possibility that one may love that which is not a friend (an enemy for example). In short, if *philia* properly understood requires that the lover should be loved by the one whom he loves (i.e., that one should be a dear friend to that which is a dear friend to him), then we are left with the problem of understanding one-sided affection (e.g., for things incapable of returning affection).

One may justly wonder why did Socrates deliberately confuse friends with 'things dear'? After all, had he expressly limited his investigation to human beings (i.e., to the realm of friendship among people), the modified

third possibility (that reciprocity is essential to friendship) would not have presented such a problem. As Aristotle maintains:

> We do not speak of friendship in the case of our affection for inanimate objects, because there is no return of affection, and no wish for the good of the object (for presumably it would be absurd for a person to wish for the good of his wine; if he has any wish it is that the wine may keep, so that he may have it himself). But in the case of a friend they say that one ought to wish him good for his own sake. (*NE*. 1155b28-32)

Yet would the simple assertion that reciprocity is essential to friendship teach us anything about friendship? Yes, but we would still be left with the more basic question: reciprocal what? To be certain that reciprocity is essential to friendship, we may have to understand more precisely what this emotion called friendly love (*philia*) properly means? And once again, this requires that we first ask why would someone love someone?

Socrates, after presenting the supposed problem of understanding one-sided affection, asks:

> was the poet speaking falsely when he said: prosperous is he who has children as friends [*philoi*],/ together with single-hoofed horses,/ dogs for the hunt, and a guest friend [*xenos*] in a foreign land (212e).[13]

By this appeal to the poet, Socrates seems to raise doubts about the third possibility. For people in general do, nevertheless, express certain relationships in terms of *philia*, despite the impossibility of their love being reciprocated. That is, they do regard an emotional feeling that one may have towards such objects as a love of such objects somehow akin to that which they have for friends. Moreover, these emotionally impotent objects of love *are* considered as 'dear' to the lover. Now, except for the example of children (upon which Socrates will soon elaborate), horses, dogs, and guest-

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[13] Bolotin points out "this translation reflects Socrates' apparent interpretation of the passage. A closer approximation to Solon's intended meaning would be 'prosperous is he who has *dear* children, single-hoofed horses, etc.' In this latter interpretation, the phrase 'dear children' may mean little more than 'children of his own.'" (Bolotin; 57). This, then, is another indication of

friends are arguably desired as means to some further end. In one sense, then, one can understand how these objects, though perhaps emotionally indifferent, can become, through their potential or actual usefulness, dear to the lover. However, Socrates continues to avoid any discussion of utility here, and instead focuses on the example of children, more precisely, newly-born children:

> Some of whom don't yet love [*philounta*], while others even hate [*misounta*], whenever they're chastised by their mother or by their father—despite even their hating [*misounta*], are nevertheless at that time, most of all, dearest [*philtata*] to their parents (212e-213a).

In order to understand better the significance of this example, one should first attempt to explain what Socrates probably means by "newly-born children". Socrates' description implies that these children are old enough to understand chastisement, which suggests that they perhaps are older than the age of one or two (just about the age when they begin to develop some awareness of themselves and of the world around them). At this age, as they begin to learn how to talk and walk, they become increasingly demanding and inquisitive; and they require a great deal of attention and observation. Now, there are two separate dimensions in this example: how do parents view their children, and how do children view their parents? As we have said before, there is no doubt that parents, at least normal ones, love their children. What is interesting, but not surprising (taking in consideration love of one's own) is that parents' love and attention to their children appears [14] to be at its height when the child is in most need of this love (at the age when

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Socrates' deliberate confusing of 'friend' and things 'dear'.

[14] It is necessary that one should qualify this sentence with 'appear'. For one should not misunderstand the attention that parents bestow on their young children (who require such attention) to mean, as the ironic Socrates seems to suggest, that parents love their children the most when they (the children) are still young.

he is most useless to himself and to his parents).[15] But what about how children view their parents? Young children, being absolutely selfish, with little rational understanding, tend to resent any attempt by their parents to prevent them from doing what they want. Such resentment can be seen as a kind of temporary hatred by the children towards their parents. Yet if the argument can be made that young children are capable of the emotion of hate, can't one as well assume that they are also capable of the emotion of love? We certainly see some evidence of love in children's strong attachment to their parents (especially to their mothers). One wonders, however, if this is truly love rather than the child's instinctive awareness that his parents are his sole providers. Whatever the answer may be, the way Socrates worded the question leaves the strange impression that newly born children are more capable of hatred than of love.

Menexenus' agreement that one may still love (and consider a friend/dear) that which may not love (or even may hate) him in return, leads Socrates to propose that "it's not the one who loves [*ho philôn*] who is a friend [*philos*] but the loved one [*ho philoumenos*]" (213a). Here Socrates switches back to the masculine form for friend (*philos*). Therefore, he is turning back, after dismissing that reciprocity is essential to friendship (by using the ambiguous *philon*), to the original question: "when someone loves [*philei*] someone, which one becomes a friend [*philos*] of the other . . . ?" Since the third possibility has apparently been completely dismissed, what is left is whether the friend is (a) the lover, or (b) the beloved. Socrates suggests the second possibility: the friend as the beloved. Menexenus reluctantly accepts this suggestion. Since (on this assumption) the love of the

[15] This is the first clear acknowledgement in this dialogue that friendly love does not have to be attached to utility, contrary to Socrates and Lysis' conclusion at the end of the second part.

lover makes of the beloved a friend, Socrates points out that by analogy, the "hated one [*ho misoumenos*] is an enemy [*echthros*], but not the one who hates [*misôn*]" (213a). This too is uneasily accepted by Menexenus. As it turns out, however, this analogy presents a serious challenge to the idea of the friend as the beloved:

> Many, therefore, are loved [*philountai*] by their enemies [*ton echthrôn*] and hated [*misountai*] by their friends [*ton philon*], and they are friends [*philoi*] to their enemies [*tois echthrois*] and enemies [*echthroi*] to their friends [*tois philois*], if that which is loved [*to philoumenon*] is a friend [*philon*], and not that which loves [*to philoun*]. And yet it is very unreasonable, my dear companion [or comrade; *ô phile hetaire*] – or rather, I suppose, it is even impossible – to be an enemy [*echthron*] to one's friend [*philôi*] and friend [*philon*] to one's enemy [*echthrôi*] (213a-b).[16]

This does indeed sounds very unreasonable, perhaps even impossible. Part of this "unreasonableness" derives from Socrates' deliberate mixing-up 'friend' with 'dear'. When a father loves his child he does not think of this child as a friend (no more than a child's irrational hatred would turn the father into an actual enemy). However, the fact that this conclusion can be readily recognised as unreasonable indicates that we cannot be indifferent to the reciprocal emotions of those people whom we recognise as our friends.

Since the idea of the friend as the beloved appears to be impossible, Socrates presents the remaining alternative: "that which loves [*to philoun*] would be a friend [*philon*] of the loved" (213b). According to Socrates, if the one who loves is the friend to the beloved, then the one who hates is the enemy of the hated. Menexenus confidently agrees with Socrates. However, to Menexenus' dismay, the philosopher concludes:

> Therefore, it will follow that we must necessarily agree to the same things as we did before, namely that often there is a friend [*philon*] of a non-friend [*mê philou*], and often, in fact of an enemy [*echthrou*], whenever someone either loves [*philêi*] something that does not love [*mê philoun*] or else loves [*philêi*] something that hates [*misoun*]. And often there is an enemy [*echthron*] of non-

[16] Again Socrates switches back to the neuter form for friend (*philon*).

> enemy [*mê echthrou*] or indeed, of a friend [*philou*], whenever someone either hates [*misêi*] something that does not hate [*mê misoun*] or else hates [*misêi*] something that loves [*philoun*] (213c).

Obviously this is not exactly the same as to Socrates' and Menexenus' previous agreement. Socrates introduces here the concept of the non-friend and the concept of the non-enemy to describe those who do not love and those who do not hate respectively. Whatever the reason for this change may be, it is clear that we have to deal here with the further problem of the indifference of that which we love. Socrates is implicitly raising the question of whether or not friendship (perhaps in contradistinction to filial-love or passionate erotic love) can be maintained without regard to the beloved's reciprocal feeling of love.

Be that as it may, Menexenus' agreement with Socrates that this option seems unreasonable leads the philosopher to conclude:

> What should we make of it . . . if neither those who love [*hoi philountes*], nor the loved ones [*hoi philoumenoi*], nor those who both love [*hoi philountes*] and are loved [*philoumenoi*] will be friends [*philoi*]? Or shall we say that there are still some others, aside from these, who become friends [*philous*] to each other? (213c).

Indeed what should we make of it? The curious way Socrates concludes this survey of possibilities make one suspect that indeed "there are some others aside from [those Socrates and Menexenus discussed] who become friends to each other." As it has now become clear, part of the problem in this section (211d-213d) is the incorrect understanding of two important (and interconnected) questions: what is friendship, and why would someone love someone? In one sense we cannot understand what is friendship, or how one can become a friend of another, apart from understanding why one loves. This, as we will see, is not an easy question.

"But anyone who lacks the capacity to share in community, or has no need to because of his self-sufficiency, is no part of the city and as a result is either a beast or a god."

Aristotle

"It had been hard for him that spake it to have put more truth and untruth together in few words, than in that speech **whatsoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god.** *For it is most true that a natural and secret hatred and aversation towards society in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast; but it is most untrue that it should have any character at all of the divine nature; except it proceed, not out of a pleasure in solitude, but out of a love and desire to sequester a man's self for a higher conversation."*

Francis Bacon

"Every attachment is a sign of insufficiency. If each of us had no need of others, he would hardly think of uniting himself with them. Thus from our very infirmity is born our frail happiness. A truly happy being is a solitary being. God alone enjoys absolute happiness. But who among us has the idea of it? If some imperfect being could suffice unto himself, what would he enjoy according to us? He would be alone; he would be miserable. I do not conceive how someone who needs nothing can love anything. I do not conceive how someone who loves nothing can be happy."

J. J. Rousseau

III. ii. Like is a Friend to his Like:

Menexenus, like Hippothales and Lysis before him, is reduced to perplexity. Yet unlike them, he declares it: "By Zeus . . . for my part I can't find my way [*ou panu euporô*] at all" (213c). In response, the ever-ironic Socrates innocently asks "can it be, Menexenus . . . that we were seeking in an altogether incorrect fashion?" (213d). At this point, Lysis, very eagerly, proclaims his agreement with Socrates, but then he checks himself by affirming that this is only his opinion.

Socrates informs us that after this outburst, Lysis blushed. In Socrates' opinion "what had been spoken escaped [Lysis] involuntarily, because of his applying his mind intensely to what [is] being said – an attitude which [has been] evident also while he was listening" (213d). The philosopher informs us that at this moment he has decided to give Menexenus a rest, and "also pleased by that one's love of wisdom" (213d-e),[1] he turns to Lysis. We should note that Menexenus' perplexity, Lysis' interruption, and Socrates' turn, all occur in the centre of the dialogue. Perhaps, then, this turning by Socrates signals some kind of shift in the type of treatment of the topic of friendship. Indeed, as one soon finds, the topic of *philia* will shift from a more political (or practical) treatment to, apparently, a more metaphysical tone.[2] At any rate, Socrates agrees with Lysis that the examination of friendship was done incorrectly, and then offers his own thoughts about what went wrong.

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[1] The context here seems to suggest that Socrates is referring to Lysis, who applies "his mind intensely to what was being said," as the lover of wisdom. However, there is an equal possibility that "that one" may be in reference to Menexenus who, unlike Lysis, is more willing to admit that he has made a mistake, is lost, or does not understand something in the argument (cf. 212d6, 213c9, 213c14, 216c5, 217d1, 218e1, 220b4). In other words, Menexenus is more willing to admit his ignorance than Lysis. Bolotin construes Socrates' remark as applying to Lysis (122).

[2] Unlike Socrates, Aristotle, in his *Ethics*, chooses to leave the question of whether friends are those who are 'like', or are those who are 'unlike' to "natural philosophy" (*NE*, 1155a24-b8).

Socrates introduces for examination the possibility that 'like is friend to like'. Before we consider his analysis, however, a brief discussion of how we generally understand the meaning of this statement will offer an appropriate contrast with Socrates' own construal.

Obviously the term 'like', as a concept of comparison among individuals, has a wide range of applicability. However, the dialogue offers some examples of comparable characteristics – dimensions of likeness and unlikeness – that might be of interest to friendship: age, nobility of birth, beauty, wealth, and power (of various sorts). Of course, simply sharing these common characteristics does not necessarily make those who share them friends. Rather, such 'likeness' creates common grounds upon which those who are alike may find common interest – thus making it desirable for one to associate with those who are *like* him. It is precisely this 'common interest' that should alert us to the most important 'like-quality', without which friendship seems impossible: that friends are those who are of 'like-mind' in some important respect(s). As Aristotle observes:

> Those, then, are friends to whom the same things are good and evil; and those who are, moreover, friendly or unfriendly to the same people; for in that case they must have the same wishes, and thus by wishing for each other what they wish for themselves, they show themselves each other's friends. (*Rhetoric*, 1381a).[3]

It is important to note that we have here two senses of 'the like' (which in fact Socrates will later utilise): a broad sense of the like that creates appropriate grounds for friendship; and a more narrow one, like-mindedness, which is an implicit quality in those who are friends.

According to Socrates, there are two advocates of the idea that 'like' is a friend to 'like': the poets, who are "our fathers in wisdom and our guides

[3] By no means is this meant to be exhaustive; rather it is just an example by which one may understand what like-mindedness means.

[*patres tês sophias eisin kai hêgemones*]" (214a); and the wisest ones (*sophôtaton*), those "who converse and write about nature and the whole" (214b). For some reason, then, Socrates presents two apparently *unlike* groups who nonetheless seem to agree that what is like is a friend to his like. One group is of those who contribute to the making of, and guidance towards, wisdom.[4] The other group is of those who think and write about nature and the whole (and as such do not simply accept the poets' authority). However, these two groups do not seem to present the same argument in support of this thesis. The poets, who are – generally speaking – the shapers of citizens' piety and morality, argue that "[a]lways a god leads [the one who is] like to [the one who is] like" (214a).[5] Note, however, that it is not the god who actually makes those who are alike friends; he only leads them to each other in order for them to become acquainted with each other. This, then, leaves some room for people's responsibility over whether or not they will (more-or-less rationally) *choose* to be friends with those who are like them.[6] On the other hand, "the wisest ones" argue that it is some kind of necessity (embedded in the nature of things) which makes what is 'like' a friend to his 'like'. This 'necessity', which those who speak about 'nature and the whole' emphasise, seems to suggest that there is more to friendship than rational self-interest (perhaps some necessary desire, some compelling natural law, for 'like' to be with 'like'; cf. 221e-222a).[7]

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[4] One assumes that Socrates means here the traditional understanding of wisdom.

[5] As Bolotin points out these lines complete a thought which began in the previous line: "Now most certainly is the bad guiding the bad" (Bolotin, 58). In light of Socrates' upcoming discussion, the missing line becomes very significant. The addition of this line can suggest that the poets see that friendship is possible between the bad and the bad.

[6] The necessity of rational choice was implicit in Socrates' earlier discussion with Lysis. There it was implied that people could only become friends with those who are useful to them.

[7] There is an additional difference in the way Socrates presents these arguments. When he is talking about the poets he uses the masculine form of friend (*philous*, 214a); but when he presents the wisest one's argument he uses the neuter form, (*philon*; 214b).

Be that as it may, under the guise that he does not understand what the poets and wisest ones mean, Socrates raises doubts about half of the argument (214b). It is not clear, however, what Socrates himself means by "half" and "all". He could be referring to the arguments of the poets and the wisest ones as two halves of one idea (the *like* is a friend to his *like*). If this is true, then this lends further support to the hypothesis that the poets and the wisest ones do not agree on what is essential about the friendship of those who are alike (i.e., is it a necessary desire in them, or simply rational self-interest). For the time being, however, Socrates leads Lysis to believe that the division in the arguments represents that of its applicability. It is on this understanding that the analysis proceeds.

Socrates maintains:

> In our opinion the nearer the one who is wicked comes to the wicked and the more he associates with him, the more hated he becomes. For he does injustice. And in our opinion, presumably, it's impossible for those who do and suffer injustice to be friends [*philous*] (214 b-c).

To a certain extent this seems to be a fair assessment. For the wicked by virtue of his wickedness would (one presumes) desire to take advantage of everyone, including those closest to him. If there is ever a situation where two wicked men (who are fully aware that what they are doing and suffering is injustice) come together, then common sense dictates that love and friendship will be impossible. Socrates implies that not doing injustice to one's associate is a minimum condition for friendship. [8] Yet Socrates does not explore the possibility that the wicked, while wicked towards other people, can be on good terms with each other (cf. *Republic* 351c-d). The fact

[8] He is silent, however, on whether or not doing justice to one's friend is an essential condition of friendship. Perhaps he leaves this out because it is obvious. Yet since, as we will soon see, it is not clear to what extent 'acting' is essential to friendship, we should not be quick to assume what may appear as obvious.

that we see wicked people having some form of a friendly interaction suggest that there is something other than wickedness which makes this supposed friendship possible. Perhaps they simply distinguish between friends and enemies (as in some sense all people do). As such, for Socrates' objection to be valid, then one must assume that the wickedness of the wicked is their only (or over-ruling) 'like quality'. Moreover, one could assume, following the wisest ones' argument, that this likeness is what *necessarily* make them friends/dear. Perhaps, for example, they mutually admire their ingenuity in contriving injustice.

Whatever the case, having secured Lysis' agreement, the philosopher proceeds: "In this way, then, half of what is said would not be true, *if* indeed those who are wicked are like each other" (214c). In what seems to be an attempt to salvage the 'whole', Socrates offers another interpretation:

> But in my opinion, they mean that those who are good are alike and are friends [*philous*] to each other, while those who are bad – as is in fact said about them – are never alike, not even themselves to themselves, but are impulsive and unsteady. And what is itself unlike and at variance with itself would hardly become like or a friend [*philon*] to anything else (214 c-d).

Clearly, Socrates is not using 'like' (*homoia*) to compare two people's ability to perform certain deeds (which he will soon discuss), nor is he using it to describe their likeness in age, wealth, social status, and other such. Instead, he seems to use *homoia* as a reference to people's like-mindedness (in the sense that they are not in conflict with each other). Now, it seems reasonable that one needs to be of like-mind (or agreement) with himself, that he have some *consistency* of character and behaviour, before he can be of like-mind with others. For example, Aristotle in the context of discussing how our feelings towards our friends are an extension of our feelings towards ourselves, implies that not even moderately bad people are capable of friendship (i.e., friendship in the fullest sense), "because they are in

conflict with themselves; they *desire* one thing and *will* another, like the incontinent, who choose harmful pleasures instead of what they themselves believe to be good" (*NE*, 1166b4-29). However, this is not really the same as what Socrates means here by 'the bad'. Unlike Aristotle, who allows the bad man to possess a notion of his own good – and the fact that the bad man does not choose to act in pursuit of this good sets him in conflict with himself – Socrates does not seem to allow middle grounds: the bad are completely bad. Surely, however, complete badness (at least in human beings) is practically impossible. For even bad people have a notion of what is good. What, then, could explain Socrates' exaggerated view of the bad? In order to answer this question, we must first note how Socrates worded this and the previous argument.

Socrates, after claiming that the wicked, or 'wretched' (*poneros*), cannot be friends (masculine, *philous*),[9] switches here to the bad (*kakos*), who cannot be friend/dear (neuter, *philon*) to anything. One suspects, then, that Socrates is here speaking about the bad abstractly (i.e., his description does not apply to what we generally understand a bad man to be). As such, we can assume that what Socrates is here emphasising to the discerning reader is that there can be no friendship based on badness *per se*. This is in conformity with our earlier observation, which allows the wicked (or wretched) to have some form of friendly interaction with each other. For as argued there, such 'friendship' cannot be based simply on their wickedness.[10]

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[9] Note that the only reference in this dialogue to someone actively committing injustice is connected with the wicked and not with the bad.

[10] The wicked might delight at each other's wickedness, insofar as they believe they are not harmed by it themselves.

Be that as it may, this new interpretation of the statement of the poets and the wisest ones leads Socrates to argue:

> This then, my comrade [or companion; *ô hetaire*], is in my opinion what they are hinting at when they say what is like is a friend [*philon*] to its like, namely that he who is good is a friend [*philos*] to the good – he alone to him alone – while he who is bad never enters into *true friendship* [*alêthê philian*] either with good or with bad. Do you *share* this opinion? (214d)

Here, as Socrates reports, Lysis "nodded assent". Perhaps this indicates that, unlike the former argument, Lysis has some reservation about this opinion (i.e. he does not *fully* share it). This would not be surprising. As seen earlier, Lysis is more willing to accept abstract arguments than those arguments that contradict his own experience. In other words, it is one thing for Lysis to accept a theoretical argument which assumes that bad cannot be dear (*philon*) to bad; quite another to accept that only the good can be a friend (*philos*) to the good. For how can this explain, in Lysis' view, the apparent friendship among all those people he regards as bad in some respect? Perhaps it is in order to ease Lysis acceptance that Socrates uses the term *true friendship*. This sole use of this term in the dialogue [11] implies that the bad (in the ordinary human sense of the word) can be capable of some form of friendship (albeit not of the highest kind).

In any case, having reached the agreement that only the good is truly like the good, Socrates now declares that they have "gotten hold of who are the friends [*hoi philoi*]. For the argument indicates to us that it is [all] those who are good" (214d-e). Lysis affirms that, in his opinion, this is "[v]ery much so". Immediately after, however, the philosopher (in his ironic fashion) expresses doubt about the validity of some aspect in this argument:

> Come now, in the name of Zeus, let us see what it is that I suspect. Is he who is like, insofar as he is like, a friend [*philos*] to his like, and is such a one useful to such a one? Or consider, rather, in the following way. Would anything

[11] Bolotin, 130.

> whatsoever which is like anything whatsoever have the *power* to hold out any benefit to it, *or* do it any harm, which that couldn't also *do* itself to itself? Or would it have the *power* to suffer anything [from its like] which it couldn't also suffer from itself? How then, would such things be treasured [*agapetheiê*] by each other, if they held out to each other no help as allies? Is that possible? (214e-215a)[12]

The fact that Socrates here emphasises power and deed suggests that he is using *homoia* to compare two people's capacity for action. Some of these actions can bring benefit, and some can be a cause of harm and suffering. In conformity with our earlier reading of Socrates' depiction of the bad, this indicates that something can be harmful to itself (like the wicked) without it being completely bad.

At any rate, Lysis agrees that it is impossible for 'like' to treasure (or 'cherish') 'like', since they cannot offer each other help as allies. And since 'like' cannot even be treasured by 'like', then friendship is out of the question. But Lysis' agreement to this bespeaks his present limitation for analysis of this sort. For even if utility is the main concern for someone who is seeking a friend, and even if people can be absolutely alike in their powers, this objection here does not prove the uselessness of those who are 'alike'. To begin with, the very term "allies", which Socrates uses here, reminds us of how, in life's many situations, people seek to combine their powers for their mutual benefit. For example, in war against a common enemy, in political deliberation for the good of their city, in play for their mutual enjoyment, as well as in helping each other in performing manual labour (e.g., lifting heavy objects). Though these examples do not

[12] It is interesting how Socrates found it more appropriate to raise these (questionable) question here; rather than in the beginning of the argument 'like is a friend to like'. Had he raised these objections there, Socrates could have easily opened and shut (for Lysis) the possibility that friends are those who are alike. The fact that he did not, indicates to us that Socrates has some other reason for raising this argument.

necessitate the likeness of those who combine their powers, in some instances, such as play, the best partner is one's equal. For one normally derives the greater pleasure from defeating one's equal, than from defeating an inferior opponent (and to some extent the opposite can also be true). [13] Since this is so obviously the case, why did Socrates raise such a weak argument?

Part of the answer lies with Lysis. Despite his earlier agreement with the saying "friends share everything in common", Lysis shows (by not noticing the problems with Socrates' argument) that he is not very appreciative of common goods, tending to take them for granted. As seen in his earlier discussion with Socrates, Lysis' wishes to escape his dependence on others (i.e., to become self-sufficient; 207e2-5), while at the same time he wishes that others will depend on him (for that will make him loved). The mutual benefit of those who are alike creates a kind of equality which perhaps clashes with Lysis' true desire to be loved exclusively. But apart from this, as noted earlier, *most* people desire to be loved more than to love; this desire clearly shows that there must be more to friendship than the friends' mutual ability to help each other. After all, those who are 'like' are not the only ones who can be useful to each other (cf. 215d-216a). To say that there is something peculiar about the utility of those who are like us, is to say more about the source of this utility than about the utility itself.

Having (supposedly) exposed the uselessness of those who are alike, Socrates asks: "yet might he who is good be a friend [*philos*] to the good insofar as he is good – not insofar as he is *like*?" (215a). In response Lysis answers, "Perhaps". Given that accepting this distinction might salvage the argument that friends are all "those who are alike" (214c-d), Lysis' answer is

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[13] Cf. *The Odyssey*, XXI, 340-359.

interesting, though not surprising. Recall that earlier, Lysis and Socrates agreed that if he were to become 'wise' (i.e., know how to do things better than others), all will be his friends, for by definition he will be both useful and good (210d). In fact Lysis was left there with the impression that he would be considered good if, and only if, he is useful. Therefore Lysis may be sceptical here that one can separate what is good from what this good can do. However, acting surprised, Socrates asks: "What? Wouldn't he who is good, insofar as he is good, be to that extent sufficient [*hikanos*] for himself?" (215a). Though Socrates does not explain in what sense the good is sufficient, Lysis accepts this assumption without qualification. Upon this claim, Socrates bases four additional assumptions.

First, Socrates states that "he who is sufficient [*hikanos*] would be in want of nothing in accordance with his sufficiency [*hikanotêta*]" (215a). This seems to be straightforward assumption, for this is what (by definition) *sufficiency* supposedly means. Yet Lysis' answer, which is in the form of a rhetorical question – "how could he not be?" – should perhaps warn us against uncritically accepting this argument.

The words *sufficient* (or *capable*) and *sufficiency* (or *capabilities*) are used a total of eight times in this dialogue (four times in this section alone). They are used seven times by Socrates (Ctesippus uses *hikanos* once to stress that Lysis' good looks are sufficient to make him known; 204e). Socrates first uses this term in his strange praise of Miccus as "not an inferior [*ou phalous*] one, but a capable [*hikanos*] sophist" (or, "sufficient wise-one"; 204a). One can assume that by *hikanos* Socrates is referring to Miccus' having sufficient 'wisdom' for administering a palaestra. The second time Socrates uses *hikanos*, it is to illustrate one's ability to think about political matters: "Don't you suppose [the Athenians] will entrust their

affairs to you, as soon as they perceive that you think capably [*hikanos*]?" (209d). Therefore, the first two uses of *hikanos* by Socrates are connected with one's ability to think in accordance with his aims. [14] But does that sufficiency make the sophist or the politician *want nothing* in accordance with their sufficiency? Unless they are truly wise, knowledge in sophistry or politics will always be lacking. This means that, at the very least, they require conversation with some like-minded individuals who can assist them in confirming or rejecting their opinions. But even if wisdom is not their main concern, they would still need to be recognised as sufficient thinkers by others. But here one may object that what Socrates is describing is the good, which he will later associate with the wise (218a). In this case, Socrates' assumption about the sufficient would be true if (and this is a big if) human wisdom can be achieved in the true sense of the word. However, if the fact is that wisdom in the fullest sense is not possible, then this means that even the good person requires like-minded friends. [15]

In the second assumption, Socrates maintains that "whoever is in want of nothing would not treasure [or cherish; *agapôie*] anything, either" (215b). The assumption here is that *agapê* is connected with want: no want, no *agapê*. Although this is not always the way that the Greeks use *agapê* (their using it to express the fondness of gods for humans is a reminder of this), it is the way it's consistently used by Socrates in this dialogue. He first use it in the context of discussing the uselessness of those who are alike (where that which cannot offer help as an ally cannot be treasured); and now in the

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[14] Of course, this ability itself does not make them good or bad.

[15] As Bacon argues, "whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words: finally, he waxeth wiser than himself; and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation." Bacon, 72-3.

context of discussing those who are good. But whereas what is *like* supposedly cannot benefit or be useful to his like and as such cannot be treasured, what is *good* supposedly seeks no benefit (being sufficient, thus needing nothing) and as such cannot treasure. Yet despite the fact that Socrates seems consistent in posing want as logically prior to *agapê*, one finds it very hard to accept that the sufficient would not treasure *anything* (at the least, his own state of sufficiency). This points to a much more serious objection with this argument: this view of the good does not seem to square with anything human. As Aristotle argues:

> It is a generally accepted view that the perfect good is self-sufficient. By self-sufficient we mean not what is sufficient for oneself alone living a solitary life, but something that includes parents, wife and children, friends and fellow-citizens in general; *for man is by nature a [political] being*" (1097b2-21).

In other words, if man is a political being (and all evidence points to this fact), then his sufficiency has to include other human beings: he becomes sufficient by virtue of the fellows who contribute to his life.

Obviously Socrates is not unaware of the political nature of human beings. The *Republic*, the *Apology*, and the *Crito* are clear enough testimony of this. What then can explain his deliberate neglect of this aspect of human nature here? For whatever else, this and the following arguments cut through Lysis' (and indeed most people's) dream of true *self*-sufficiency: would the sufficient man need friends; and more importantly would he desire to be a friend?[16] To answer 'yes' to this question is to imply that there is more to friendship than utility (however broadly construed). In order to restrict the definition of the friend to what is useful, then we must agree with Lysis that the answer is 'no'. It is important to remember that the latter point stands

[16] Indeed this last point is what Lysis, in the earlier discussion with Socrates, took for granted: he would be willing to be a friend to the useless.

even if one's notion of sufficiency includes other human beings. As Euripides claims: "When Fortune smiles on us, what need of friends?" [17]

At any rate, in the third and fourth arguments, Socrates states that "whoever would not treasure [*agapôie*] would not love [*an philoi*]"; and "whoever doesn't love [*mê philôn*] is not a friend [*philos*]" (215b). In order to accept these arguments, one should assume that *agapê* is logically prior to friendly love, and that friendly love is logically prior to friendship. Though this seems reasonable, a closer examination of this and the previous arguments reveals it to be puzzling. When he first rejected the argument that what is *like* cannot be friend to his like, Socrates rhetorically argued that that which cannot *be treasured* cannot be friend (*philon*). Here he seems to raise the same objection, but actually turns it around. The issue under consideration here is not the passive friend (that which is treasured), but it is the active friend (the one who treasures). [18] Socrates' purpose behind this is not clear. However, this once again reflects the attitude of those who see friendship as a strictly utilitarian enterprise. As needy individuals, people seek the friend for his usefulness. Of course this understanding creates a problem: why would the good-as-useful person desire to *be* useful (in appropriate circumstances)?

At any rate, Socrates now asks:

> How, then, in our view will those who are good be at all friends [*philoi*] to the good, since neither do they long [*potheinoi*] for each other when absent – for even apart they are sufficient [*hikanoi*] for themselves – nor do they have any use for each other when present? What device is there for those who are of such a kind to make much of each other? (215b).

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[17] Quoted in Aristotle's *Ethics*, 1169b9.

[18] We cannot simply dismiss this difference here as minor, for Plato could have written these sentences any way he wished. In a dialogue where Socrates begins the explicit treatment of friendship by asking who is the friend, the lover or the beloved (212a-b), this should at the very least alert us to the possibility that there is something to the fact that he is switching from the passive sense of the friend to the active sense of the friend.

Up to this point, Socrates' profile of the good leaves the impression that the good would not have a reason to *be* friends with anyone (good or otherwise). In this argument, however, Socrates does not address this implication, and instead focuses exclusively on the relationship among the good. Thus Socrates keeps open the possibility (one which he will in fact later use) that the good can be a friend to something other than the good. [19] This should not be surprising since it does not seem possible to separate the good from what it is good for (cf. 220c). In any case, the supposed fact that the good are sufficient means that their friendship to anything (if possible) will not be motivated by self-interest (broadly construed). But if it is an altruistic friendship, and the friend is supposed to be useful, then the good will be unable to be friend (i.e. useful) to the good, since both are sufficient.

If those who are good "don't make much of each other," Socrates proposes, "they wouldn't be friends [*philoi*]" (215c). The presence of this *if* should perhaps alert us that there might be a way (as indeed one suspects) for the good to make much of others like themselves and as such to be friends. But for now Socrates concludes: "[C]onsider, then, Lysis, where we have gone astray. Are we somehow being deceived in the whole?" (215c). Lysis' answers "How could that be?" Note here that unlike the rest of his responses wherein Lysis answers with a question (cf. 207e1, 207e8, 208b6, 209e9, 210d7, 215a12), this one may not be rhetorical. But presuming that it is, then Lysis does not see a real problem with the fact that the good cannot be friend to the good.

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[19] However, if that is so, one cannot help but wonder whether by the same token the good can still be a friend to the good. And bearing in mind the 'weakness' of Socrates' argument here, this should be the case.

"There is little friendship in the world, and least of all between equals, which was wont to be magnified. That that is, is between superior and inferior, whose fortunes may comprehend the one the other."

Francis Bacon.

III. iii. Unlike is a Friend to Unlike:

Since what is like supposedly cannot be friend to his like, Socrates turns now to examine the opposite claim: that friendship is between opposites. This argument, which Socrates supposedly heard from someone, [1] can be divided into three parts.

First, there are the introductory comments and Hesiod's poem. Socrates recalls:

> I once heard someone – and I just now recollect it – saying that what is like was most hostile to its like, and that those who are good [were most hostile] to the good. And moreover, he brought Hesiod forward as witness, saying that, 'Potter bears a grudge against potter, and singer against singer, and beggar against beggar' (215c-d).

The *good* in this introduction appears to differ from the two qualities of the good Socrates describes in the previous section. The good here is not characterised by his inner *likeness* which would make him capable of friendship; nor is he characterised by his sufficiency which would make him want nothing, treasure nothing, love nothing, and as such allows him no reason to become a friend. The good here wants something and that thing makes him most hostile [*polemiôtatoi*] to the good. This hostility, the speaker contends, is similar to the one between the like and its like. [2] Hesiod's poem supposedly clarifies the source of this hostility: *competition*. Hesiod, of course, views this kind of strife between rivals as healthy, for potentially it can motivate one to prove his worth among his equals. As such, this kind of healthy competition can actually be a ground for the friendship

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[1] It is curious how Socrates tries, as much as possible, to distance himself from this argument. First, the fact that he once heard this argument and not recollect it earlier gives the false impression that Socrates never reflected seriously on the argument. Second, Socrates keeps reminding Lysis and Menexenus that this is not his argument by referring to this anonymous speaker. Third, the only positive remark he has for this argument is that its advocate is a clever speaker. Fourth, he quickly dismisses this argument.

[2] Those who are alike here, are alike in two things: the object which they seek, and in their

of those who are alike.[3] However, since in competition there are winners and losers, then it is perhaps easy to see that for "things most alike" it is possible "to be most filled with envy [*phthonou*], love of victory [*philonikias*], and hatred [*echthras*] towards each other" (215d). Yet what is most problematic is the anonymous speaker's emphasis on the necessity of this feeling. For he does not even allow the possibility of emulation (rather than envy) among those who are alike.

After informing his interlocutors of what the anonymous speaker told him about the enmity of those who are *most* alike, Socrates informs them of what this speaker said about the friendship (*philias*) of those who are *most* unlike:

> For he who is poor, he said, is compelled to be a friend [*philon*] to the wealthy, as he who is weak, to the strong – for the sake of help as an ally; and so it is between the one who is ill and the doctor, and in all things whoever doesn't know is compelled to treasure [*agapan*] the knower and to love [*philein*] him (215d).

With respect to utility, this argument seems to take the 'unlikeness' of those who would be friends to its ultimate conclusion: they are so unlike that only one can be in need of the other. As such, this can only be a 'one-way' friendship; for there seems to be no compelling reason (i.e., no prospect of benefit) for the rich, the strong, the doctor, or the knower to *reciprocate* the friendship of those who "treasure" and "love" them. One may object here that those who are superior can also benefit from this friendship by gaining

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potential ability to achieve that objective.

[3] Aristotle states that "emulation is pain caused by seeing the presence, in persons whose nature is like our own, of good things that are higly valued and are possible for ourselves to acquire; but it is felt not because others have these goods, but becasues we have not got them ourselves. It is therefore a good feeling felt by good persons, whereas envy is a bad feeling felt by bad persons. Emulation makes us take steps to secure the good things in question, envy makes us take steps to stop our neighbour having them. Emulation must therefore tend to be felt by persons who believe themselves to deserve certain good things that they have not got, it being understood that no one aspires to things which appear impossible" (*Rhetoric*, 1388a30-b2). Lysis and Menexenus seem to exhibit this type of 'healthy strife' (cf. 207c, 211b-d, 213d, 216a).

loyalty, honour, money, or by simply being loved (which is also a good) by those who seek their help (cf. *NE*, 1159b14-16). Yet for this to be the case, it would contradict the speaker's point that those supposed friends are *most* unlike; which means that the superior cannot be a seeker of benefit (as is the inferior). This, of course, raises a curious point: why did the speaker insist on this extreme view of unlikeness?

Recall that the speaker has insisted that since each necessarily desires the good for himself, those who are most alike are most filled with enmity towards each other. This means that for those who are most unlike to be most filled with friendship, they should have nothing to quarrel about. In the case of extreme unlikeness this is possible because the superior needs nothing from the inferior. This apparently cannot be the case if both the superior and the inferior expect some benefit in return. For in this situation there will be the risk of dissolving this friendship if either one of them thought that he did not get what he deserves. [4]

In any case, a closer look at this argument's four examples reveals it to be even more curious. While the first, second, and fourth examples describe relationships between opposites, the third does not. For the opposite of the ill is not the doctor; rather it is the healthy. The reason for this switch is obvious: since this 'one-way' friendship is based on need, the anonymous speaker had to mention that the doctor (and not the healthy man) as the most unlike which the ill seeks. Again this is consistent with the

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[4] As Aristotle argues: "Quarrels also occur in friendships that involve superiority; because each party expects to get more, and when this happens the friendships breaks up. The person with the better character thinks that he should have more because more should be assigned to a good man. . . . But the man who is needy, and an inferior character, takes the contrary view: that it is the mark of a good friend to help those in need. 'For what is the point', they say, 'of being the friend of a good or influential man if there is no prospect of enjoying any benefit from it?'" (1163a24-36)

speaker's description of utilitarian friendship that is based on the calculated self-interest but of the inferior party only. He never actually says that the rich is compelled to be a friend of the poor, the strong of the weak, and so on. Hence, one wonders why would the superior enter this friendship?

Perhaps as an answer to this question, the anonymous speaker, like the 'wisest ones' before him, bases this friendship on some kind of principle in nature:

> And indeed, he kept pursuing his argument still further and more magnificently, saying that what is like was wholly removed from being a friend [*philon*] to its like, but that the situation was rather the very opposite of this. For that which is most opposite, he said, is most a friend [*malista philon*] to the most opposite; that is to say, each thing desires what is of such a kind, and not its like; namely, what is dry desires [something] wet, what is cold [something] hot, what is bitter [something] sweet, and what is sharp [something] blunt, while what is empty desires filling and what is full emptying, and the other things likewise according to the same account; for what is opposite, he said, is a sustenance to its opposite; for what is like would enjoy no advantage from its like (215e-216a).

In this 'magnificent' and quite abstract argument, the anonymous speaker explicitly switches from the term unlike (*anomoion*) to the term opposite (*enantion*). These are *not* identical. What is opposite is unlike, but what is unlike is not necessarily opposite. It is not clear why the speaker makes this switch, though rhetorically it serves a purpose. At the very least, in the ordinary way of speaking 'unlike' is a much broader term than opposite. For people can be unlike in countless ways, while opposites are such in reference to something particular. This explains why in his earlier speech the speaker used the example of the ill and the doctor (who are unlike but not opposites). In this last speech, however, he is referring to something in particular which only one's opposite can provide. Thus it is the mutual desire of two opposite kinds to possess something which they lack by themselves, that supposedly drives this friendship. Yet the mutual desire for friendship described in this

latter (abstract) part of the speech does not seem to have anything to do with the one-way friendship in the former (more practical) part of the speech. For example, it cannot be said that the rich wants to be friends with the poor out of his intense desire to lose his (excess) money, much less become poor himself. Moreover, each supposed friend desires the other not for his own sake, but for the sake of what the other can provide.[5] Not that the speaker does not realise this: "for by his account what is full and what is empty do not desire each other; rather, what is full desires emptying and what is empty desires filling".[6] He does not mention, however, what happens when one's desire has been satisfied. Yet even if this desire cannot be fully satisfied (as the relationship between erotic lovers would suggest) what guarantee is there that those who are opposite will not quarrel (cf. 212b9-c).

Later on in the dialogue, Socrates addresses this very problem. For now he concludes by saying that he thought the anonymous man was clever: "For he spoke well" (216a). The philosopher then asks both Lysis and Menexenus to give their own opinion about what was said. While Lysis remains silent, Menexenus replies that in his opinion the anonymous man spoke well. But what explains this silence on the part of Lysis? Though the first part of the speech echoes the earlier conclusion he has reached with Socrates – the ignorant loves the knower (210d) – his silence regarding the second part of the speech is consistent with his attitude in the previous section regarding common goods. This part of the speech creates a type of equality which does not fit Lysis' wish for distinction. In any case,

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[5] After reminding us that it is ridiculous for a lover who is not equal to his beloved to demand equal affection from his beloved, Aristotle insists that: "The probability is, however, that one opposite is attracted by the other not essentially but incidentally, and the object of the impulse is the mean (because this is good): e.g. the impulse of the dry is not to become wet but to reach the intermediate state; and similarly with the hot and all the rest." (*NE*, 1159b22).

[6] Bolotin, 138-9.

Menexenus' response leads Socrates to ask: "shall we then assert that what is opposite is most a friend [*malista philon*] to his opposite?" (216a). Menexenus confidently agrees.

To this confident answer, Socrates replies:

> Isn't that strange, Menexenus? And won't these all-wise men, the ones skilled in contradicting, be pleased to leap upon us straightway and ask whether enmity[7] isn't most opposite to friendship [*philia*]? What shall we answer them? Or isn't it necessary to agree that they're speaking the truth? (216a-b)

This seems to be a misrepresentation of the anonymous speaker's point. His argument is that opposition is the cause of friendship – that 'opposites attract' – while similarity is the cause of enmity. Those who are skilled in contradiction, however, dealt with the effect (friendship/enmity) as independent sources of opposition, which in its turn should lead to friendship. As such, it is the argument of those who are skilled in contradictions (i.e., eristical sophists), rather than the anonymous speaker's argument, which leads to the problematic conclusion that "that which is an enemy is a friend [*philon*] to the friend [*philôi*], or is that which is a friend [*philon*] [a friend] to the enemy" (216b). Yet if this is so obvious to us, why did Socrates raise such a misrepresentation of the anonymous speaker's argument?

Bolotin suggests a deeper reason on the part of Socrates for making friendship an independent source of opposition to enmity: "Perhaps those opposites can go together to such an extent that the same being is at the same time a friend and an enemy to the same being."[8] Indeed there is something about this even in our relation to ourselves. Often in our love for ourselves we hate that in us which make us weak (or perhaps hate that in us which

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[7] I have slightly departed from Bolotin's translation of *echthra* as 'hatred,' preferring 'enmity,' as this latter word would provide a better parallel with friendship.
[8] Bolotin, 140-1.

reminds us of our weakness). If that can be true in our relation to ourselves, cannot this be also true in our relation to that which is opposite to us? Whatever the case, this example reminds us that just as in likeness *hatred* can be present, also in opposition hatred too can be present. And yet there is something about this observation that make us question whether hatred can be compatible with true friendship. Surely loving something for its own sake (because it is truly good), cannot involve an element of hate.

Socrates continues: "[I]s that which is just a friend to the unjust; or what is moderate, to the undisciplined; or what is good, to the bad" (216b). This too is somewhat of a misrepresentation of the anonymous speaker's argument. In his account of friendship among opposites, the speaker did not refer to the character of those who are opposite. After all, what he has described is a utilitarian friendship which is based on rational self-interest. Yet even if this is a misrepresentation, one can nonetheless argue that it is not an unfair criticism. For it does not seem possible to define true friendship apart from the character of the friends. For how can a man who loves justice be a friend with that which is unjust; and how a man who can control his impulsive desires be in concord with a man that lacks such discipline; or generally speaking how can a good man (who is 'like himself') be a friend with the bad.[9]

Menexenus agrees with the hypothetical argument of those who are skilled in contradiction that this would not be the case. In response to this Socrates insists: "yet . . . if something is indeed a friend [*philon*] to its friend [*tôi philôi*] by way of opposition, even these things are *necessarily* friends [*phila*]" (216b). Menexenus affirms that this utterly unacceptable conclusion

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[9] Note that in this short list of opposites, Socrates omits that of the friendship between those who are bad, even though he did define the bad as unlike the bad.

would follow of necessity. Thus Socrates concludes: "Therefore, neither is what is like a friend [*philon*] to its like, nor is what is opposite a friend to its opposite" (216b).

"There is a wisdom in this beyond the rules of physic: a man's own observation, what he finds good of, and what he finds hurt of, is the best physic to preserve health. But it is a safer conclusion to say,* This agreeth not well with me, therefore I will not continue it, *Than this,* I find no offence of this, therefore I may use it. *For strength of nature in youth passeth over many excesses which are owing a man till his age."

Francis Bacon

III. iv. The Neither Good nor Bad is a Friend to the Good:

Having supposedly rejected the contention that 'like is a friend to his like', as well as the contrary view that 'opposite is a friend to opposite', Socrates now offers a new alternative in his search for what is truly a friend (*to philon hôs alethôs*): "[W]hatever is neither good nor bad [*mête agathon mête kakon*] may thus *at some times* become a friend [*philon*] of the good [*tou agathou*]" (216c).[1] What follows, one presumes, is Socrates' attempt to prove the possibility of this friendship (216c-218c). We might note two important things here. First, Socrates is using the neuter form of the good (*agathon*).[2] This is in contrast with the masculine form of good (*agathos*) – implying a good man – which, for the most part, was used in the previous two sections. Thus one should be open to the possibility that 'the good' here might have a broader sense than simply a description of human beings.[3] Second, this view of friendship does not seem to admit of reciprocity. As such, we are introduced, once again, to 'one-way' friendship.

When asked by Menexenus to explain this statement, Socrates, in his ironic fashion, declares:

> I don't know, but I am really dizzy myself from the perplexity [*aporias*] of the argument, and I'm afraid – as the old saying goes – that what is beautiful [*kalon*] is a dear [or friend; *philon*]. It seems, at any rate, like something soft, smooth, and sleek. And that is why, perhaps, it slides past us and gives us the slip, inasmuch as it is thus. For I say that the good is beautiful [*kalon*] (216c-d).

This is one of the most perplexing statements in this dialogue. For why is Socrates (ironically) afraid of the truth of the old saying? What is that "it" which is supposed to be "soft, smooth, and sleek"? Is it beauty, the old

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[1] The qualification "at some times" suggests that Socrates is ruling out the role of necessity in this friendship. This, then might be the first difference from the previous 'necessity arguments' advanced by the wisest ones and the clever speaker. Yet as we will see, Socrates will gradually advance the role of necessity in friendship.

[2] And for the most part he will use this form for the rest of the discussion.

[3] See note number 7 in the introduction.

saying, the argument, or the friend? Bolotin suggests that 'it' refers to the friend (dear) which makes it "in this sense beautiful."[4] Since this is the object of inquiry, we should perhaps cautiously proceed with Bolotin's suggestion. Of course, this reading in itself does not clarify why these supposed 'qualities' in what is dear (friend) would deceive in the search for friendship. Moreover, why would this statement be important; for at first glance it seems no more that a digression? In other words, what does the supposed friendship of 'the neither good nor bad' have to do with the beautiful/noble being a friend/dear? An adequate answer to all these questions cannot be attempted here. Suffice it for now to make a few general observations. Obviously Socrates' fear (irony notwithstanding) indicates that this 'old saying' either runs contrary to what Socrates understands to be true about 'the dear' (could it be that we are 'ruled' more by *beauty* than by goodness – as one might suspect of Hippothales); or that by accepting this saying he would have to reject what previously was agreed to regarding love and friendship.[5] As evident by his conclusion here as well as by his next argument, Socrates does not simply accept this old saying, though he does indicate that something about it might be true.

In any case, Menexenus easily affirms that what is good is beautiful/noble. Through "divination", Socrates proposes that "whatever is neither good nor bad is a friend [*philon*] of the beautiful and good" (216d).[6] With this Socrates manages to modify the old saying: it is now the beautiful

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[4] Bolotin, 144.

[5] The dialogue supports this observation. Note for example Menexenus' expression of fear in 212d6, 213c9, 220b4, and 221d8; as well as that of Socrates' in 218c9, 218d2, and 220b2.

[6] Obviously, Socrates here, following the habit of diviners, is speaking in riddles. For by using the neuter *philon* it becomes less clear for us who is friend/dear to the other. Is it that the neither good nor bad is dear to the beautiful and good; or is it that the neither good nor bad is a friend to the beautiful and good?

and good that is dear. However, since whatever is good is supposedly beautiful, then arguably this 'divination' should be equivalent to saying that the intermediate is a friend/dear to the good. The fact that Socrates, in the following arguments, will focus exclusively on the good suggests this much.[7] Yet if that is so, why did Socrates raise the question of the beautiful in the first place?

As seen in the beginning, beauty has a special place in this dialogue. For example, Hippothales attempts to lure Socrates to the palaestra by the assurance that inside are many good-looking (*kaloi*) ones (203b-204a); as an indication that he is in love, Hippothales blushes when asked to report whom he thinks is the most beautiful one (204b); Ctesippus claims that Lysis good-looks are sufficient to make him known (204e); and finally in examining the two young friends (Lysis and Menexenus), Socrates asks whether or not they dispute about who is more beautiful (207a). This emphasis on beauty should not be surprising, since we tend to admire those who are beautiful (and even see them as worthy of love). This can be seen, for example, in Socrates' comment of how Lysis "stood out by his appearance as someone *worth* being spoken of not only for being beautiful, but because he was beautiful *and* good" (207a). Of course, this comment subtly distinguishes between the beautiful and the good: even were we to agree that the good is beautiful, not everything beautiful (or at least not everything seen as beautiful) is necessarily good. We saw this in Socrates' subtle warning to Hippothales that his beloved might not turn out to be of the sort that he (Hippothales) originally thought him to be (205e2). And he further warned him that if his beloved escapes him "the greater the praises [he has] spoken of [his] favourite, the greater will be the fine *and* good things [he will] have been

[7] Bolotin, 144.

deprived of" (206a). This might shed light as to why Socrates is uneasy about associating the friend/dear with the beautiful to the exclusion of the good. Though, again, he does suggest that what is friend/dear might have something of the deceptive nature of the beautiful (cf. 217c-218e). As such, it appears that Socrates' following arguments are a compromise between 'the old saying' and his views about the beautiful. This compromise might be necessary since Socrates, in his previous examination of the arguments of the poets, the wisest ones, and the clever speaker, did not address the attraction of the beautiful/noble as something which can itself lead to friendship.

In any case, Socrates asks to be listened to as a diviner, for in his opinion, "there are, as it were, some three kinds – that which is good, that which is bad, and that which is neither good nor bad" (216d). Menexenus agrees that in his opinion this division seems likely. With this Socrates proceeds to outline what relationships, in his opinion, were eliminated in the previous arguments.

> [I]n my opinion neither is what is good a friend [*philon*] to the good, nor is what is bad [a friend] to the bad, nor is what is good, to the bad – just as the previous argument doesn't allow it. There is left, *if* indeed anything is a friend [*philon*] to anything, that whatever is neither good nor bad is a friend [*philon*] either of the good or what is such as itself. For nothing, surely, would become a friend [*philon*] to the bad (216d-e)

The fact that Menexenus affirms 'the truth' of this statement shows that here at least he shares his friend's opinion that their previous 'seeking' had been misguided (cf. 213d4, 215c3). Socrates then reminds him that they have further rejected the premise 'like is a friend to like'. Menexenus agrees that this too was rejected.[8] According to Socrates this means "to whatever is neither good nor bad, that which is such as it is itself will not be a friend

[*philon*]" (216e). Menexenus reluctantly accepts this. Perhaps he senses that there are an indefinite number of *different* ways something might be "neither good nor bad". Or perhaps he, unlike Lysis, is not fully convinced that those who are alike are useless to each other. Indeed, Menexenus seems to have greater appreciation of common goods than Lysis. At any rate, through a process of elimination it appears to be that the only option remaining is that the neither good nor bad is a friend (*philon*) to the good, "that alone to it alone" (217a). Menexenus affirms that this "as it seems" is necessary. Having established this general rule, Socrates proceeds to test it on the particular case of the human body. Again, since this seems to be a one-sided affection, where the lover (the intermediate) becomes a friend to his beloved (the good), and not the other way around, then the following should demonstrate why this is a necessity.

Socrates asserts:

> Well, boys . . . and is what is now being said guiding us in a fine [*kalos*] way? If we were willing to conceive of the healthy body, at any rate, it has no want of the medical art or of benefit. For its condition is sufficient [*hikanos*], so that no one when he is healthy is a friend [*philos*] to a doctor because of his health. Isn't that so?

Here we have a relationship between two things: a healthy man, who possesses a healthy body, and a doctor who possesses knowledge in the medical art. Since (presumably) the only reason a man would wish to be a friend to a doctor, qua doctor, is the latter's skill in the medical art, then the healthy man, when healthy, has no immediate need to be a friend to the doctor. Yet one might argue that the healthy man, out of fear that he might get sick in the future (or out of the desire to know how he can remain healthy in the present; cf. *Lovers*, 134e1-3), would still wish to have a doctor

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[8] This need not mean that Menexenus necessarily agrees with the argument.

for a friend. Moreover, as the example of the Great King remind us, one might wish to be a friend to a doctor for the sake of his loved ones (210a). However, the fact that Menexenus does not see a problem with this example is not surprising. For, as a healthy boy, the prospect of illness does not seriously trouble his imagination. Therefore, while manipulating Menexenus' ignorance of the future, Socrates, for some reason, is focusing on friendship as a necessary activity in the sense that it is grounded in *need*.

Socrates first establishes what virtually everyone would agree to: that disease is a bad thing while the medical art is a beneficial and good one (217b). Still, there are a number of curious things here. Socrates focuses attention on the medical art as opposed to health, which would provide the better counterpart to disease (since they are opposites). That is, the real, intrinsically good thing is health; the medical art is itself only instrumentally good insofar as it can restore or maintain health. [9] Moreover, he drops out the original relationship between the *doctor* and the ill man, replacing the former by his art. The reason behind this is not immediately clear. However, if for some reason Socrates is attempting to describe a 'one-way friendship' that is based on necessity, then this focus on the relationship between the ill body and the medical art does serve this purpose. For what the ill body immediately requires is the relief of the medical art (which aims at health), not the friendship with the doctor. But thought about more completely, we should see that some 'friendship' – or at least, non-enmity – on the part of the doctor is necessary. This can be seen in the example of the Great King's son who is diseased in his eyes. The King would not allow treatment by a known enemy, however skilful he might be in medicine. The friendship

[9] This is important to note here, since soon the question is raised regarding that which is truly friend and regarding the usefulness of the good (cf. 219b-c).

which the ill man feels towards the doctor may be only incidental, since it is his body which requires the help of the medical art, but the friendship of the doctor may be necessary if he is to use his art to help rather than harm.

Ignoring this vital complication affecting the *practice* of medicine, Socrates suggests that the body "insofar as it is a body – is neither good nor bad" (217b). Menexenus affirms this. However, it is not obvious in what sense this is the case. Socrates could mean that the body, insofar as it is a body, is neither healthy nor diseased. Yet it does not seem possible to think of the living body without assuming its health (for that is its natural condition and the 'mechanisms' for maintaining and restoring health are 'built in'). And that being the case, then Socrates could be implying that the body can be healthy without it being good (cf. 217a7). This in fact seems reasonable. As Bolotin suggests: "in speaking of the healthy body as sufficient, Socrates disregards for the time being that even it requires food and drink to sustain its health (contrast 221a-b3). He does this, apparently, so as not to divert attention from the far greater distress of disease. Unlike the healthy body, which may well be a mere conception of the mind (217a4-5), our bodies are all subject to disease and death." [10] However, this should also make sense to Menexenus despite his apparent lack of appreciation as to what the future may bring. For he, like Lysis, must understand the good as that which is beneficial (i.e., good for something). As such, he must believe that an idle body that does not benefit the one who possesses it cannot be called a 'good body' (even though it is healthy; cf. 209a2-4). At any rate, having established that disease is bad, that the medical art is beneficial and good, and the body itself is neither good nor bad, Socrates now concludes: "whatever is neither good nor bad becomes friend [*philon*] of the good

because of the presence of evil" (217b). In this fourth variation of the original hypothesis (216c2-4; cf. 216d5-6, 216e10-11), we have a *cause* for this friendship: the presence of evil. Menexenus replies that this "seems so".

However, Socrates imposes a qualification on this assumption:

> [I]t is clear that this is before it itself becomes bad as a result of the evil which it has. For once it had become bad, it would no longer have any desire [*epithumoi*] for, or be a friend [*philon*] of, the good. For we said that it was impossible for bad to be a friend [*philon*] to good (217b-c).

Here Menexenus affirms this, insisting that it is impossible. Based on this agreement, Socrates will attempt to prove two things. First, that the bad can exist in the intermediate without causing it (the intermediate) to be bad itself. Second, that this bad is what causes the intermediate to seek the friendship of the good. To serve this purpose, Socrates will provide two analogies: one involving colour, the other wisdom.

Socrates suggests:

> Now examine for yourselves what I say. For I say that some things are also themselves of such a kind as whatever is present, whereas some are not. For example, if someone were willing to rub anything whatsoever with any colouring, I suppose that [the colouring] which rubbed on is present to that which it's rubbed upon (217c).

Though this beginning is intended to illustrate how the bad can be present in the intermediate without causing it to be bad, Socrates himself does not make this connection until the end of this analogy (217e7-9). As such, we should keep in mind, following the example of the body, the possibility that (analogously) the good can be present in the intermediate without causing it to be good. At any rate, Socrates' reasoning seems plausible. For if someone were to rub a colouring over something, then it can be safely assumed that this colour is present to that thing. Having secured Menexenus' agreement, Socrates asks him: "Then is that which is rubbed upon of such a kind, *at that*

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[10] Bolotin, 148.

time, with respect to colour, as what is on it?" (217c). Sensibly, Menexenus admits that he does not understand. This is a sensible answer since there are many factors that he needs to take into consideration before properly answering this question. For example, he needs to know what type of colour is applied (is it something that can easily be removed – as dust on one's skin or paint on a statue; or is it not – as stain applied to wood, or dye to cloth), and what type of surface the colour would be applied to (flesh or stone, wood or wool). However, in general, we would wish to distinguish any new colour applied to something from that thing's 'own' antecedent colour.

In any case, to help Menexenus better understand the question, Socrates asks him to reflect on his own self: "If someone should rub [his] hair – which is blond – with white lead, would it at that time be white, or would it appear so?" (217d). Menexenus asserts that it would (merely) appear so. Further agreeing that though whiteness is present, his hair would be neither white nor black. Socrates then continues: "But when, my friend [*ô phile*], old age brings this same colour to it, it becomes at that time of such a kind as what is present – white by the presence of white" (217d).

Having gone through the colour example, Socrates supposedly repeats the original question:

> This, then, is what I'm asking, if whenever anything is present to something, that which has it will be of such a kind as what is present. Or will it be so if the something is present in a certain way, and if not, not? (217e)

Menexenus affirms the latter. There is an interesting feature about this example. On the surface it is supposed to show how the bad can be present to something without affecting that thing's nature (and this will be supported by the next point). But implicitly it points to a deeper problem: how to

recognise the real quality of something or someone – whether they are *really* good or bad – as distinct from mere appearance. [11]

Be that as it may, Socrates chooses to focus on the surface. He insists that what they have agreed to so far means that "whatever is neither bad nor good is sometimes not yet bad although an evil is present, but there are times when it has already become such" (217e). Menexenus agrees, rather emphatically, that this is so.

This leads Socrates to conclude:

> Then whenever it is not yet bad, though an evil is present, the presence makes it desire [*epithumein*] good. But the presence which makes it bad deprives it of the desire [*epithumias*], at the same time as the friendship [*philias*], of the good. For no longer is it neither bad nor good, but it is bad. And a good thing, as we showed, is not friend [*philon*] to a bad one. (217e-218a)

One understands from this that the friendship which the intermediate may *feel* towards the good depends on the way the bad is present to it. That is – as is clear in the colour example – the existence of the bad has to be seen as bad. And this, supposedly, will lead the intermediate to desire the good. Notice, however, that Socrates does not in fact say that this desire will necessarily lead to love (though this will be implied in the next point). This should not be surprising, if we reflect again on the example of the Great King's son. The pain in his eyes would naturally lead him to desire the good (i.e., the relief for his eyes). However, instead of waiting patiently for the doctor, the pain may compel him to attempt to treat himself (which is obviously harmful). Moreover, Socrates will later argue that it is possible for someone who desires "sometimes to desire beneficially, and sometimes harmfully, and sometimes neither" (221b). However, he does indicate that if the bad makes the intermediate completely bad (i.e., he no longer sees the

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[11] This, one suspects, has been Socrates' real concern from the beginning of this section: that something may appear beautiful, thus be held dear, without regard for the good.

bad as bad), then he will be deprived of both the desire and friendship of the good. As such, we can assume that Socrates means the desire for the good to be a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for friendship. But in the background lurks an obvious problem: the bad is not always painful (as is a disease). Indeed, too often it is pleasant, or more pleasant than painful.

Since Menexenus agrees with the premise that the bad is what makes one desire the good, Socrates turns to explain how this leads to friendship, by using the example of the philosopher:

> Because of these things, then, we *might say* also that the ones who are already wise [*sophous*], whether these are gods or human beings, no longer love wisdom [*philosophein*]. Nor, on the other hand, would we say that those love wisdom [*philosophein*] who have ignorance in such a manner as to be bad. For we wouldn't say that anyone bad and stupid [*amathē*] loves wisdom [*philosophein*]. There are left, then, those who while having this evil, ignorance, are not yet senseless or stupid as a result of it, but still regard themselves as not knowing whatever they don't know. And so therefore, the ones who are not yet either good nor bad love wisdom [*philosophousin*]; but as many are bad do not love wisdom [*philosophousin*], and neither is what is opposite a friend of its opposite, nor is what is like a friend [*philon*] of its like. Or don't you [plural] remember? (218a-b)

If one takes this argument to its logical conclusion (thinking seriously of its implication), one begins to realise why there are very few people who can be called philosophers in the fullest sense.[12] However, we should keep in mind that Socrates is making this argument to a young boy. Obviously, this boy must have a different understanding of wisdom than Socrates' (cf. *Theages*, 122c-d). What does Menexenus understand wisdom to mean? It is not too much to assume that he, like Lysis, must think of wisdom as the ability to think capably about many things.[13] And that he conceives 'lovers of wisdom' as those who desire to think capably (cf. 216d9-10). Since wisdom

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[12] In his interpretive essay, Bolotin offers a quite different but helpful analysis of this problem (see p. 151).

[13] This should be contrasted with Socrates' own claim that his inferior and useless in many things except his knowledge of eros (204b-c).

is beneficial and good (for the one who seeks it), then only those who are completely bad (like his slave attendant perhaps) do not seek wisdom. Of course, his slave is not free to seek it, even should he wish to. Worse, then, are those bad and stupid ones of his peers who prefer to keep on playing rather than join in the conversation with Socrates. Of course, in keeping with this understanding of wisdom, it should come as a surprise for Menexenus that Socrates claims no knowledge about those who can be called wise. After all, Socrates has already quoted Solon (one of the Seven Sages of ancient Greece); talked about the poets as "our fathers in wisdom"; and presented the arguments of "the wisest ones". Moreover, Socrates himself, who is "an old man" (223b), has already developed the reputation of being 'a wise man' (cf. *Apology*).

However, as evident by their decisive answer, this argument is very appealing to both Lysis and Menexenus. And this for a good reason: for they now see themselves as philosophers, which distinguishes them from the rest of their peers and put them in the same rank as Socrates. And yet they do not notice that by this very agreement they must deny that they can be friends with each other since they, as 'philosophers', are alike. Moreover, since, as 'philosophers', they are not only different from the rest of their peers, but 'better'; hence, they cannot be friends with anyone else who is 'non-philosophical'. However, the fact that they did not notice this is very telling: they have demonstrated *in deed* how this very search for a common good has unified them as friends.

Having secured the boys agreement Socrates now declares:

> We have now, then, . . . Lysis and Menexenus, most certainly discovered that which is the friend [*philon*] and [that which] isn't. For we assert – regarding the soul, and regarding the body, and everywhere – that whatever is neither bad nor good is itself, because of the presence of an evil, a friend [*philon*] of the good. (218b-c)

Socrates gives the impression that this is the culmination of the investigation which began with Menexenus' perplexity (213d). For since then they have dismissed the contention that 'like is friend to like' as well as the contrary claim 'opposite is friend to opposite', thus ending with the conclusion that the intermediate is a friend to the good because of the presence of evil. But, as indicated, the arguments there as well as those here are weak to the point of fallacious; still, we should not dismiss this conclusion as simply eristic. In other words, there is something to Socrates' focus on the individual's love of the good (which is caused by a perceived evil) that helps in the understanding of the problem of friendship. For in all our attempts to show the weakness in Socrates' refutations (especially about the friendship of those who are alike), we were obliged to illustrate how each individual friend can benefit from such friendship. And as such we implicitly acknowledged a self-regarding (or selfish) aspect to friendship, an aspect that does not seem to crave reciprocity so much as the benefit one can gain from that which is seen as dear. However, what makes these kinds of friendship more enduring (than what Socrates seems to allow) is that in their search for friendship people generally do not look only to the opportunity of the moment. Thus not only present evils force us to look for remedies, but also the fear of future ones. Still, as is evident by the example of the doctor, we do expect our friend to possess some friendly feeling towards us.

At any rate, Socrates reports to his listener(s) that:

> [The boys] entirely assented and granted that this was so. And what is more, I rejoiced greatly myself, as if I were a hunter and had, to my satisfaction, what I had been hunting [for myself]. But then some most strange suspicion came over me – from where, I don't know – that the things we had agreed to were not true, and at once I said in vexation, "Woe is me, Lysis and Menexenus! I'm afraid it was a dream that we've been wealthy. (218c)

We shall put aside the obvious irony in Socrates' statement, and instead deal with it seriously. Socrates compares his joy in reaching this conclusion to the joy of a hunter who caught his prey. Perhaps he is alluding to his supposed 'life-long dream' of having a friend (211e) – friend with whom, one presumes, Socrates can share everything in common. [14] Yet as it stands, this conclusion here does not seem to admit the possibility of human friendship (let alone of sharing since each friend seeks his own good). Nevertheless, just as one would expect genuine friends would do, Socrates shares what troubles him, rather than keep it to himself. To his painful complaint, Menexenus – Lysis keeps his silence once again – asks: "why do you say that?" (218d). This signals a fresh examination of the topic of friendship.

[14] Note Socrates' mentioning of wealth. This was the one thing (out of four) which Socrates (ironically) presumed the boys would not dispute about, assuming their friendship, for 'the things of friends are said to be in common" (207c).

"I have no duty to be anyone's friend and no man in the world has duty to be mine. No claims, no shadow of necessity. Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art, like the universe itself (for God did not need to create). It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things which give value to survival."

C. S. Lewis

"Moreover what we normally call friends and friendships are no more than acquaintances and familiar relationships bound by some chance or some suitability, by means of which our souls support each other. In the friendship which I am talking about, souls are mingled and confounded in so universal a blending that they efface the seam which joins them together so that it cannot be found. If you press me to say why I loved him, I feel that it cannot be expressed except by replying: 'Because it was him: because it was me.' Mediating this union there was, beyond all my reasoning, beyond all that I can say specifically about it, some inexplicable force of destiny."

Michel De Montaigne

III. v. Loving Something For its Own Sake:

Socrates begins his explanation by declaring once again his fear (cf. 216c7-8). According to him they "have come across some false arguments about the friend [*philou*] – [false] like boastful human beings" (218d). We should assume then that Socrates' earlier attempt to avoid the deceptive nature of the dear (by proposing that what is good *and* beautiful is dear; 216c-d) has failed. Menexenus, once again, asks Socrates to explain himself. In reply, the philosopher suggests that they look at the problem differently: "Is he who would be a friend [*philos*] a friend [*philos*] to someone, or is he not?" (218d). This switching back to the masculine form of friend (*philos*; cf. 215d-218d)[1] should serve as a reminder to Menexenus of what previously they have almost lost sight of: the investigation of friendship among human beings. Menexenus agrees that this is necessarily the case: a friend is a friend to, or of, someone. He further agrees that someone becomes a friend to someone for the sake of something and because of something. This seems reasonable and should not contradict their previous agreement regarding the intermediate's love of the good because of the presence of evil.

Socrates then asks:

> Now that thing, for the sake of which the one who is a friend [*philos*] is a friend [*philos*] to his friend [*philô*], is it a friend [or dear; *philou*] or is it neither a friend [or dear; *oute philou*] nor an enemy [or, nor hated; *oute echthrou*]? (218d)

Menexenus admits that he does not quite follow. This reply is understandable since the question is obviously too complex for Menexenus to give an immediate answer to. However, it is tempting for us – who have enough time to reflect on this question – to answer that that thing should be dear. For to say that that for the sake of which one seeks friendship is neither

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[1] With the notable exception at 217a8, which does describe in no uncertain terms a human relationship.

dear nor hated, is to imply that one can be indifferent to it. And that being the case, there would be no apparent reason why one should seek the friend for its sake. At any rate, Socrates assures Menexenus that he expects this answer from him, suggesting: "But perhaps you will follow in this manner, and I suppose that even I will know better what I mean. The one who is ill, as were saying just now, is a friend [*philos*] of the doctor. Isn't that so?" (218e).[2] Menexenus agrees to this and to the observation that the ill is "a friend [*philos*] of the doctor because of disease and for the sake of health" (218e). Socrates then asks: "And is disease an evil?". Menexenus responds: "How could it not be?" And this seems to be the right answer (however, cf. *Republic*, 496b7-c3, *Laches*, 195e7-196a4). And when asked by Socrates whether health is "a good or an evil or neither", Menexenus asserts that it is a good.

Having re-established agreement regarding the goodness of health and the badness of disease, Socrates continues:

> We were saying, then, as it seems, that the body, which is neither good nor bad, is because of disease – that is, because of what is bad – a friend [*philon*] of the medical art; and the medical art is a good. And the medical art has accepted the friendship [*philian*] for the sake of health, and health is a good. Isn't that so? (219a)

For the second time in this dialogue Socrates replaces the relationship between the ill man and the doctor with that between the body and the medical art (cf. 217a-b). And with this he switches the masculine form of the friend (*philos*) to the neuter form (*philon*). The earlier change seemed appropriate to Socrates' point, which emphasised a necessarily 'one-way friendship' based on the immediate need of the one who is seeking this

[2] This first part of this response illustrates for us, as well as Menexenus, how a discussion among friends can be very useful not only for seeking answers, but also as an aid to clarify the important questions.

friendship. Here, however, Socrates began by describing a potentially reciprocal relationship (a friend of "someone", who can be a friend in return), which should not require this change from a human relationship to a relationship among things. For some reason, however, Socrates wishes to keep the focus on the immediate need of the one who first seeks this friendship. And he does that by taking the friendship of the other for granted, thus shifting the focus from the doctor to the medical art.

In any case, having secured Menexenus' agreement regarding the previous argument, Socrates asks: "and is health dear [or friend; *philon*] or not dear [or friend; *ou philon*]?" (219a). Menexenus agrees that it is a dear (or friend). Moreover, he agrees that disease is hated (or an enemy; *echthron*). Here we should note an important difference between Socrates' earlier question regarding the goodness and badness of health and disease, and this question regarding the love or enmity one may feel towards them. Whereas it can be argued that health, in and of itself, is unqualifiedly good, and that disease, in and of itself, is unqualifiedly bad, the same cannot be said regarding their dearness or enmity. For to a certain degree we can be 'objective' regarding the goodness or badness of something. However loving or hating it must involve some recognition of its effect on us, however indirect. Of course, in loving something we do implicitly see it (rightly or wrongly) as good to some extent, and that in hating something we do see it (rightly or wrongly) as bad. However, that does not mean that we necessarily love (or appreciate the quality of) everything that is good for us. For example, we begin to appreciate the value of good health when we experience disease.

This sets the stage for Socrates' next argument:

> That which is neither bad nor good, therefore, is a friend [*philon*] of the good because of what is bad and what is hated [or an enemy; *echthron*], and of the sake of the good and dear [or a friend; *philon*]. (219b)

The addition of dear and hated to the good and bad respectively, should alert us to the following: aside from the fact that something can be both good *and* dear, or both bad *and* hated, there are at least four other possibilities. First, that something can be good but not dear (e.g., sometimes health is not appreciated by those who are healthy; 217a). Second, something can be dear but not good (e.g., the beautiful, though loved, might not be good; 205e). Third, something can be bad but not hated (e.g., ignorance in those who are bad and stupid; 218a). Fourth, something can be hated but not bad (e.g., young children might hate their parents when they are disciplined by them; 213a). Of course, none of this should affect what seems to be Socrates' main point: we love that which we believe is good for us, hate that which we believe to be bad for us, and are indifferent to that which we believe does not affect us. This may explain why Socrates, in the following question omits the good and bad, focusing only on the friend/dear and enemy/hated as if they were, respectively, synonyms for good and bad, respectively: "That which is a friend [*philon*], therefore, is a friend [*philon*] for the sake of the dear [or friend; *philon*], and because of that which is hated [or enemy; *echthron*]" (219b). This is supposed to be Socrates' answer to the original question (218d): that thing, for the sake of which a friend is a friend to his friend, is something dear.

Menexenus replies that this "seems so". Having reached this point Socrates begins to outline the problem which supposedly troubles him:

> Since we have arrived here, boys, let us apply our minds lest we be deceived. For that that which is dear [or a friend; *philon*] has become a friend [*philon*] of the friend [*philou*], and [that] that which is like becomes a friend [*philon*] of its like – which we assert to be impossible – this I allow to go by. But nevertheless, let us

> examine this following matter, so that what is now being said doesn't deceive us. The medical art, we assert, is a friend [*philon*] for the sake of health. (219b-c)

It is not immediately clear what Socrates means by the first part of this statement. For how can the argument that the friend is a friend of the friend be equivalent to the statement that like is a friend to like? It seems that only in speech can this be the case. For, by using the body example, we can read the statement to mean that the medical art (which is a friend) has become a friend of health (which is also a friend). However, the fact that each is alike in name does not mean that both are actually alike: the second friend is the end which the first friend aims at. As one soon discovers, this is precisely what Socrates' wishes to draw attention to. That is, he wishes to avoid, in his search for the friend, linguistic confusion. Of course, this does not change the fact that he is the one who first introduced such confusion by dealing with things dear (*philon*) as friends.

In any case, Menexenus agrees that the medical art is dear (friend) for the sake of health, and that health is also dear (or friend; *philon*). Further agreeing that as dear (a friend), it has to be for the sake of something, and that "that something is dear [or a friend; *philon*], if it is going to follow [their] previous agreement" (219c). Similarly, that "that too [will] also be a friend [*philon*] for the sake of a dear [or friend; *philou*]" (219c). So the problem, apparently, is that we are confronted by an infinite regress. Here, then, Socrates suggests:

> Isn't it necessary, then, for us to renounce going on like this or else to arrive at some beginning principle, which will no longer bring us back to another dear [or friend; *philon*], but will have come to that which is dear [or a friend] in the first place [*prôton philon*], and for the sake of which we say that the other things are also all dear [or friends]? (219c-d)

Menexenus asserts that this is "necessary." As is clear, Socrates introduces an important change in the argument regarding friendship. Earlier, the

understanding was that the friend comes to be as a response to an immediate need (which is caused by a perceived evil). Here, however, Socrates presents an ultimate dear thing ('friend') for whose sake other things come to be dear ('friends'). Moreover, since this 'first friend' appears to be loved for its own sake, then one should presume that this love exists regardless of the presence of evil in the intermediate. At least we can presume this much from the example of the body. For even the sufficiency of health – which earlier denied the friendship between the healthy man and the doctor (217a) – appears to be pointing to another friend. In fact, according to the next argument, health cannot even be called dear (a friend). For there Socrates argues: "[A]ll the other things which we say are dear [or friends; *philia*] for the sake of that – being some phantoms, as it were, of that – are deceiving us, and I suspect that it is that first thing which is truly dear [or a friend; *alêthôs philon*]" (219d). In order to help the boys better understand this argument, Socrates provides a practical example:

> Now let us conceive of it in this manner. Whenever someone makes much of something – as sometimes a father values his son more highly than all his other possessions – would such a one also make much of something else for the sake of considering his son worth everything? For example, if he should be come aware that his son had drunk hemlock, would he make much of wine, if he considered that this would save his son? (219d-e)

Socrates' suggestion that a father might value his son more highly than all his other possessions is quite reasonable. However, the fact that a father has other possessions is an indication that no matter how much he loves his son, a father would still desire other things which would make his life pleasant. And, of course, he may have more than one child, and love all of them dearly. In Solon's opinion, for example, a blessed man is the one who has not only dear children, but also has single hoofed horses, dogs for the hunt, and guest-friend in a foreign land (212e). This is important to note, since the

fact that these other possessions are less valuable to the father than his child, does not mean that they have no value to him. But even more to the point, it does not mean that the value of these other things is *derived* from that of the most valued thing (i.e., his son). This being the case, the fact that a father would be willing to sacrifice whatever possession he may have for the sake of his child shows his willingness to think less of himself (of the fact that these possessions were valuable *to him* for whatever reason) for the sake of that which he loves the most. At any rate, Socrates' point still stands. In this particular case, if wine would save his son's life, then a father would clearly make much of wine and the earthenware cup which contains the wine, as crucial instruments of saving his son: "for all such seriousness is not directed to those things which are provided for the sake of something, but to that for the sake of which all such things are provided" (219e-220a). Socrates then reminds Menexenus that people generally do attach high values to material possessions, such as gold and silver, but that that does not change the truth of the matter: these things are only sought as means to some end. He further argues: "[T]hat which we regard as [above and beyond] everything – whatever it comes to light as being – [is] that for the sake of which gold and all provisions are provided. Shall we not speak in this way?" (220a). One should take note of how Socrates determines here the *inherent* value of a thing: it is something which one does not dispose of for the sake of something else. Menexenus eagerly accepts this. And to a certain extent this seems reasonable. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that for most people money is extremely valuable precisely because without it, they cannot acquire so much of what they desire. Thus, money becomes so intimately associated with happiness that it is often confused as an end in itself.

In any case, having supposedly established what it means for something to be valuable, Socrates now asks if it is the same case regarding the *philon*. There is a sense in which the previous example is similar to how one views one's friends. That is to say, most friendships are either utilitarian or pleasure friendships, in which one becomes dear to the other with respect to the end hoped to be achieved. Yet it cannot be said that it is "*manifest* that we say 'friend' [*philou*] in name only as regards all those things which we assert to be dear [friends; *phila*] to us for the sake of some other dear [friend; *philou*]" (220a-b). For there is also a sense in which a utilitarian friend becomes more important than the end one seeks. The very name 'friend' (as distinct from the name slave, hireling, partner, or companion) indicates that the one who takes that name is more than a mere instrument, which one would be willing to abuse, sacrifice, or dispose off when something better comes along. Moreover, we feel a certain amount of gratitude (long after our needs are satisfied) regarding those who freely help us. By this very admission, one begins to recognise that even a utilitarian friend must maintain some personal qualities which make him loved as a friend. [3]

In any case, Socrates' usage of the neuter form of the friend (*philon*), permits one to look at this problem from a different angle. As it has been argued before, *philon* (dear) is a general term that can be applied to almost anything which people say they love. Now, in general most of what people say they love, is loved for the sake of something else (as Socrates demonstrated in this section). In this case, it is easy to see how what is really dear is itself that "into which all those so-called friendship [or loves; *philiai*]

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[3] Having said this we have to agree with Aristotle that the strength and duration of this kind of friendship lasts as long as the friends are useful or pleasing to each other. For the primary cause of this friendship was utility and/or pleasure, but not the personal qualities of the friend (cf. *NE*, 1156a6-23).

terminate" (220b). Indeed this can be applied to the friend: what one truly loves about one's friend (who is worthy of the name) has to be a quality that makes him loved for his own sake. But would this quality, by necessity, be good? This is the object of Socrates following inquiry.

Having dismissed the view that "what is a friend [*philon*] is dear [or a friend; *philon*] for the sake of [something] dear [or some friend; *philon*]", and with it the notion that utilitarian or pleasure-based friendship is the true or complete friendship, Socrates asks: "But then is that which is good a friend" (220b). Menexenus replies that in his opinion this is true. This less than confident answer on the part of Menexenus is very telling. Having agreed that what is truly dear is loved for its own sake, the boy is not very sure what it is good for. However, to propose that it is otherwise (i.e., either bad or neither good nor bad) does not seem to make any sense. As argued earlier, most people see the good as that which is beneficial, and it is precisely because of that, that it is seen as dear. But now in light of the new definition of the dear we are presented with the following problem:

> Then is what is good loved [*phileitai*] because of what is bad, and is the situation as follows? If, of the three beings which we were just now speaking of – good, and bad, and neither good nor bad – the two of them were left and what is bad should get out the way and lay hold of neither any body, nor any soul, nor any of the other things which we assert to be, themselves in themselves, neither bad nor good, would what is good be in no way useful to us at that time, and would it have become useless? For if nothing were to harm us any longer, we would require no benefit at all, and thus it would become manifest then that we had been treasuring and loving what is good because of what is bad, as if that which is good were a drug for the bad, and what is bad were a disease. And if there is not disease, then a drug is not required. And as for what is good, is its nature like this and is it loved [*phileitai*] by us – who are in the middle of the bad and the good – because of what is bad, while it is of no use itself for its own sake? (220c-d)

The first problem with this argument is the strict criteria by which something can be defined as useful or beneficial. Clearly not every thing useful or beneficial is so because of the presence of evil. Whereas it can be said that

the medical art is only good insofar as there is disease, health itself is seen as good. It is seen as such not only because it is a condition where one does not suffer the pain of disease, but also because it enables one to pursue and enjoy the other goods in life. Moreover, there are many things in life which people regard (rightly or wrongly) as simply good. For example, listening to music and playing sports. These kinds of activities can be seen as beneficial and good, not because of what is bad, but for the sheer enjoyment of them (though perhaps also for further good things which they cultivate). Of course, Socrates avoids this problem by his argument that utilitarian or pleasure friendship is not true friendship. Moreover, the emphasis up to now was on friendship as a necessary activity. And this is so for a good reason. For we generally feel that something cannot be truly loved unless there is some 'necessity' attached to it, as reflected in the feeling that not having that thing in our life is bad. This is seen in Socrates' example of those who should be called philosophers. It is not simply the presence of ignorance that makes one love wisdom (otherwise everyone should be called a philosopher). Rather only the one who sees ignorance as an evil that 'must' be overcome would truly love wisdom. Whereas, the suggestion that the good is loved simply for its own sake does not seem to admit of such necessity.

As it turns out, this view of the good has a serious implication regarding that which is truly dear:

> Therefore, that dear [or friend; *philon*] to us, into which all the others [were seen to] terminate – for we asserted that those things were dear [or friends; *phila*] for the sake of another dear [or friend; *philon*] – has no resemblance to them. For they have been called dear [or friends; *phila*] for the sake of dear [or friend; *philou*], but what really dear [or friend; *philon*] comes to light as being of nature entirely the opposite of this. For it has appeared plainly to be a friend [*philon*] to us for the sake of the hated [or enemy; *echthron*], and if that which is hated would go away, it is no longer, as seems, dear [or friend; *philon*] to us. (220d-e)

As is clear by now, this conclusion is based on two problematic (and closely linked) assumptions. First, that anything which is valued because of its utility has no real value in itself. Second, that the good can only be that which is useful. Regarding the first, we have already seen how a friend can become more valuable than the utility which he offers. As to the second, there is enough evidence from the dialogue to suggest that Socrates does not share this view. For example, in his separation between the good and the useful (210d2; cf. 217b2-3) as well as in his description of his life long dream of having a good friend (211d-212a). Moreover, Socrates' question here is whether or not we would still love the good if we did not have something hated (an 'enemy') which compels us to love it. That is, if we were self-sufficient (if there were no *necessity* to love anything; cf. 215b), would there still be love?

It seems that the answer to this question requires an application of one's rational imagination. As Socrates suggests:

> In the name of Zeus, . . . if that which is bad ceases to be, will there no longer be hungering or thirsting, or any other such things? Or will there be hunger, if indeed there are humans and the other living beings, but without its being harmful? And will there be thirst, and the other desires [*epithumiai*], but without their being bad, inasmuch as what is bad will have ceased to be? Or is the question ludicrous – what will be or will not be then? For who knows? But this, at any rate, we do know, that even now it is possible for one who is hungry to be harmed, and it is possible for him also to be benefited. Isn't that so? (220e-221a)

It appears that in the beginning of this argument, Socrates invites the discerning reader to reflect on how we as intermediate (thus limited) beings view the good. For if we can imagine a world in which the bad does not exist, then should not we assume that in that world there would be no hunger or thirst? Clearly these are two of the first things which should be considered as bad, since everyone experiences them and knows that they are painful. Moreover, prolonged they can lead to death (which many see as the ultimate

evil). However, Socrates, for a reason that is not immediately clear, does not stop here. He further asks if hunger, thirst, and the other desires would still exist so long as there are human beings but without them being harmful or bad. Our perplexity regarding this second option leads us to reflection on the substance of what we as human beings naturally imagine 'the good life' to be: it is necessarily a life that is suitable to us as humans (who, among other things, *enjoy* eating and drinking that which 'tastes *good*', i.e., affords a positive pleasure, not merely relief of pain). As Aristotle argues "everyone wishes his own good – nobody would choose to have all the good things in the world at the price of becoming somebody else. . . but only while remaining himself, whatever he is" (*NE*, 1166a16-b4). In other word, most people's view of 'the good life' is one in which they can enjoy satisfying their desires of eating, drinking, and having sex, but without the pain necessarily attached to them. Considering it from this point of view, then, the question no longer seems as ludicrous as it first sounded to be, for it clearly shows that not everything dear is such because of the presence of evil. That is, necessity (and the pain attached to it) is not the only thing that makes people love.

Be that as it may, according to Socrates, the only thing positively known in the present condition of human beings (the condition where the bad exists) is that the one who is hungry can be harmed or benefited. Though it is obvious, we should note that one would be benefited by the moderate satisfaction of his desire: choosing the right type of food in the right amount, at the right time. Whereas, one can be harmed by the immoderate satisfaction of his desire: choosing the wrong type of food in the wrong time and in excess. In such case, it is not that this desire (hunger) is particularly

bad, but how one would choose to act upon this desire is what makes it beneficial or harmful.

Seemingly following the same line of argument, Socrates asks:

> Then is it also possible for one who is thirsty, and who has all the other such desires [*epithumonunta*], sometimes to desire [*epithumein*] beneficially, and sometimes harmfully, and sometimes neither? (221b)

One can assume that those desires whose satisfaction Socrates claims are neither harmful nor beneficial, are of those things which are simply pleasant. To eat when hungry can be beneficial but to desire a specific kind of food simply because it is pleasant may in itself be neither harmful nor beneficial. [4] Of course, the objection can be raised that the pleasant can be seen as good from the point of view of the one who desires it. However, one can answer this objection by pointing out that since that which is simply pleasant is not necessary for the body's survival, then it cannot be viewed as truly beneficial (that is from the view of the disinterested observer). In any case, Menexenus emphatically agrees that this is so. This enthusiastic answer should not go unnoticed. It appears that Menexenus believes that most of what he does is of no real consequence.

Since Menexenus accepts this tripartite division of desires, Socrates returns back to the imaginary world, where the bad does not exist, by asking:

> Then if the things which are bad are ceasing to be, what connection do they have with those which don't happen to be bad, so that those should be ceasing to be together with the evils? (221b).

Menexenus replies that there is no connection. And this seems to be reasonable. But by this assumption one would expect that we either benefit or at least not be harmed by this satisfaction of these desires. However, according to Socrates' next statement, the only desires remaining are those

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[4] Craig, 87-88.

which are neither good nor bad. In light of Socrates' previous arguments, this would indeed follow. For if the good (or beneficial) are *only* desired insofar as they remedy what is bad, and the bad should get out of the way, then the desire for the good would also cease (i.e., one would only desire the pleasing because it is pleasing). Yet here again we should take note of Menexenus' less than confident answer that this "appears so". For it is one thing to assume that most of what he does is of no consequence, quite another to say that to partake in such 'harmless' activities has no real value. Indeed even this imaginary world where the bad does not exist and where one is not compelled to do anything is seen by many as good.

However, ignoring Menexenus' hesitancy, Socrates asks:

> Now is it possible for one who desires [*epithumounta*] and who loves passionately [*erônta*] not to love [*mê philein*] that which he desires [*epithumei*] and loves passionately [*erai*]? (221b)

The first thing that might strike one as odd in this question is that of the apparent inclusion of eros among those desires which are neither good nor bad. The intensity of this passion alone can be an indication that one does regard the object of love as good to him (and that the inability to fulfil such a desire as bad). Why would Socrates, then, mention it? Here Socrates must be paying attention to his older listeners, more precisely Hippothales and Ctesippus. If Socrates here is imagining 'the good life', then it would not be a perfect place for those youths if it did not permit/include passionate love (*eros*; cf. *Republic* 372c-d).

Apart from this, however, it is not clear why, as Socrates' question would seem to suggest, it may be possible for one who loves passionately, *not* also to love in a friendly way his object of love. For on the face of the matter, *eros* and *philia* seem to be two opposite phenomena. *Eros* appears more intense, more selfish and less rational than *philia*. With the selfishness

of *eros* is born possessiveness and jealousy, things which (one can strongly argue) have no place in friendly love. This can be enough indication that, at the very least, it is sometimes possible for someone who loves passionately not to love as a friend his object of love. However, since Socrates is posing this question while assuming the bad not to exist, then perhaps the philosopher's assertion is justifiable. The reader has already seen that a major concern for passionate lovers is the thought that their love is not requited (212b-c). If this evil of unrequited love can be eliminated, then perhaps the passionate lover would be more confident in loving also in a friendly way his object of love. At any rate, so far as this judgement is based on everyday observation, Menexenus does not see a problem with this proposal. In other words, he observes how lovers keep protesting their love and their willingness to serve their beloved.

Since a passionate (erotic) lover must supposedly love as a friend (i.e., see his beloved as dear), Socrates suggests that: "There will be, then, as it seems, some [things that are] friends [or dear; *phil'atta*], even if evils cease to be" (221c). Menexenus agrees. Socrates then reminds him that if the existence of the bad was the only reason for anything to be friend/dear, and if the bad ceases, then there would not be any reason for love. "For if a cause ceased to be, [Socrates supposes] it would be impossible for there still to be that [thing] which had this cause" (221c). Menexenus asserts that Socrates is "speaking correctly". Though from the start we have had reservations regarding the exclusive terms by which Socrates explained friendly love, this last objection cannot be one of them. To a certain degree, it seems reasonable to assume that a friendship which was first formed on the basis of utility could dissolve if the purpose of this friendship no longer exists. Yet, typically, the ties of friendship take time to develop. What first begins as a

mutually beneficial relationship potentially can develop into something more meaningful than the original cause of utility or pleasure. Of course, this should not affect Socrates main point here: that we cannot simply define the need for friendship based on the existence of the bad.

Be that as it may, Socrates reminds Menexenus of their previous agreement that a friend (*philon*) loves (*philein*) something and because of something. And that at that time they supposed that the intermediate loves the good because of what is bad. Menexenus agrees. With this Socrates suggests: "But now, as it seems, there appears some other cause of loving [*philein*] and being loved [*phileisthai*]" (221d). There is an interesting difference in the presentation of those two causes. In the earlier one, Socrates seemed to focus on the question of why would someone love. Here, however, Socrates seems to be shifting the focus again to reciprocity in friendship.

At any rate, having secured the boy's agreement, Socrates asks:

> Then is desire [*epithumia*], as we were just now saying, really a cause of friendship [*philias*]? And is what desires [*epithumoun*] dear [or a friend; *philon*] to that which it desires [*epithumei*] and at the time when it desires [*epithumei*]? And as for that which we were previously saying to be dear [or friend; *philon*], was it some kind of idle talk, like a long poem strung together? (221d)

Menexenus replies: "I'm afraid so". Since Socrates will next deal with the first part of this statement, we shall deal here with this part which prompted Menexenus to declare his fear. Now if what has been said previously had no connection with this last 'revelation', then one would be tempted to agree that the former arguments were indeed "some idle talk". However, examined carefully, one comes to the realisation that these two sets of arguments are indeed related. For what Socrates has described so far (about loving the good because of what is bad) is also rooted in desires. Indeed, in the earlier arguments, Socrates did briefly allude to the connection between desire and

friendly love (217c2, 217e12-13). However, as noted, the earlier argument describes a relationship that is based on necessity (attached to pain); and what Socrates is describing here are desires that are supposedly neither good nor bad (and as such not painful).

In any case, Socrates now begins to examine the relationship between desires and friendship. He first asks Menexenus whether or not "that which desires [*epithumoun*] desires [*epithumei*] whatever it is in want of"(221d-e). This seems true. After all, how can anyone desire that which he does *not* want? Menexenus sees no problem here and confidently answers yes. However, in response to the second question, ("[i]s what is in want . . . a friend [*philon*] of that which it is in want of?"), his answer is much more guarded: that this is so is merely his opinion (221e). This response is understandable. For a proper answer to this question requires the answer of a number of other question which Menexenus by now has learned must first be asked and answered (and this is another indication that the previous arguments were not some idle talk). For example: is that which is desired, desired for its own sake or for the sake of something else; can this desire be satisfied; and if it can, would that thing remain dear? However, the example of the passionate lover can, arguably, ease some of these concerns. For, hearing passionate lovers talk, one would think that they love unconditionally, and that this love never stops with the satisfaction of their desires. But also, note how one does 'feel friendly' ("is a friend") towards whatever one hold dear – this goes back to the sick man being a 'friend' to the (dear) doctor and his medical art.

Socrates then proposes that want comes to be "of whatever it is somehow deprived of" (221e). Menexenus strongly accepts this. Socrates further adds: "It appears, then, Menexenus and Lysis, that passionate love

[*erôs*], friendship [*philia*], and desire [*epithumia*] happen to be for what is akin [or one's own; *oikeion*], as it seems" (221e). Socrates here reports that the boys assented, which led him to conclude: "You, therefore, if you are friends [*philoi*] to each other, are by nature in some way akin to each other" (221e). Despite the ambiguity of this claim, both Lysis and Menexenus (in unison) agree that this is so. What explains their eagerness to accept this conclusion? The mention of kinship must remind both Lysis and Menexenus of their attachment to their respective families and (more importantly) of their family's attachment to them. This filial relationship cannot be simply explained in terms of calculated self-interest (that is, not in terms of loving the good because of what is bad). And the fact that both accept this suggestion indicates that they see in their relationship some kind of this family-like attachment. After all, it was observed that they are closer comrades to each other than to anyone else (206c). However, as will soon become obvious, this definition leaves much to be desired. Two problems come to mind. First, how does this 'soul-kinship' come to be in those who are not biologically akin? Second, one must take into account the fact that the bonds of kinship are not always strong. Lysis and Menexenus are perhaps closer comrades than they are with their own brothers and the rest of their kin.

At any rate, Socrates continues:

> And therefore, . . . if someone desires [*epithumei*] another, boys, or loves him passionately [*erari*], he would never desire [*epithumei*], nor love passionately [*êra*], nor love [as a friend; *philei*] unless he happened to be akin in some way to his passionately beloved [*erômenoi*] – either in his soul, or else in some character of his soul, or some of its ways, or some aspect of it. (222a).

Socrates reports that Menexenus emphatically agrees while Lysis remains silent. One can surmise why there are two different responses. For one thing, Menexenus was not present in that part of the conversation with Lysis where

Socrates (at least on the surface) undermined the relevance of 'love of one's own'. Moreover, both Lysis and Menexenus view the relationship between a passionate lover and his beloved from different perspectives. Menexenus perhaps views it from the same perspective as his cousin Ctesippus: he can see a lover (like Hippothales) who has his mind on his beautiful beloved more than the others do (205b-c). This might indicate to Menexenus the existence of a special bond in the mind of the lover regarding his beloved which makes this love more intense in the lover's mind than it would be in others. Lysis, on the other hand, views this relationship from the beloved's perspective. He is perhaps uncomfortable at the prospect that he shares something in common with Hippothales, a man whom he may not love (cf. 207b6-10).[5] These two different perspectives have at least the following implication: a love that is based on 'soul-kinship' has to be reciprocated in order to develop into a friendship.

This brings us to Socrates next claim: "[I]t has come to light as necessary for us to love [*philein*] what is akin in nature" (222a). Menexenus replies that this "seems so". This cooler response (in comparison with the previous one) on the part of Menexenus is also understandable. For it is one thing to propose that one must feel a certain kind of kinship with those he loves, quite another that one must by necessity love those who are akin. As noted although one may feel a certain attachment to one's kin, this does not always translate into love.

Disregarding this important observation regarding love of kin, Socrates further argues that "It is necessary, therefore, for the passionate lover [*erastêi*] who is genuine, and not pretended, to be loved [*phileisthai*]

[5] Of course, by remaining silent, Lysis, though uncomfortable, must think that this conclusion is at least reasonable.

by his favourite(s) [*paidikon*]" (222a). Socrates reports that both "Lysis and Menexenus, with difficulty, somehow nodded yes, but Hippothales radiated all sorts of colours as a result of his pleasure." (222b). Perhaps, what makes this conclusion difficult to accept is the fact that Socrates has made a leap in the arguments. On the one hand, we have a passionate (erotic) lover who desires his beloved, and as such must love him as a friend. On the other hand, we are to expect a reciprocal feeling from the beloved (who after all might lack erotic passion towards his lover). Moreover, Socrates further complicates this picture by emphasising the necessity of this love. For even in the relationship between a parent and his children (which exemplifies 'love of one's own'), parents love for their children is not always reciprocated (cf. 212e-213a). Of course, it is very understandable why Hippothales would be so excited: he believes that he has finally got what he wants. All he needs now is to prove to Lysis that he is a genuine lover and not pretended (i.e., that he is truly akin to Lysis).

In any case, Socrates, as we have come to expect, given his practice throughout the dialogue, once again raises doubts about this conclusion:

> Lysis and Menexenus, if what is akin differs in some respect from the like, we might be saying something, in my opinion, concerning what a friend [*philou*] is. But if it happens that like and akin are the same, it isn't easy to reject the previous argument, which says that what is like is useless insofar as there is likeness. And it is out of tune to agree that what is useless is a friend [*philon*]. Do you wish, then, . . . since we are drunk, as it were, from the argument, for us to grant and to declare that what is akin is something other than the like?

This is an invitation to reflect on the relationship between the previous (idle) arguments and this new one here. As we have argued, before, nothing in Socrates' objection regarding the claim that 'like is a friend to like' proves that they are useless to each other (214e4-215a6). The examination of that argument, however, did show that the potential or actual utility of those who

are alike cannot in itself explain the reason behind their possible friendship. Socrates himself has hinted at a deeper link when he offered to examine the possibility that such friendship can be based on goodness (215a7-9). However, since the good was then explained in terms of its utility, its in sufficiency proved a hurdle in the explanation of the friendship among good men. Now it does seem appropriate here to explain such friendship on the basis of the kinship among good men. For this would explain (as it would in a family) why they would long for each other regardless of utilitarian concerns. For some reason, however, Socrates chooses to delay the discussion of kinship among the good by examining the relationship between kinship and likeness. Why would this relationship be important?

Going back to the example of 'soul-kinship' that is supposedly present in passionate (erotic) love as well as in friendly love, we discover that both likeness and unlikeness seem to play an important role. For example, in passionate love the relationship between lover and beloved is a relationship between unlike. And it seems that this unlikeness which attracts the lover to the beloved (cf. 215e). Lysis and Menexenus on the other hand, seem more alike than unlike, and one suspects that this likeness must have something to do with this friendship (for example, by the healthy competition which it fosters in them). This, then, might suggest that the kinship which an erotic lover feels towards his beloved might be different from the one that a friend feels towards his friend. This can be supported by the fact that Socrates has already suggested different kinds of kinship depending on what part of the soul this attraction is present in (222a4-6). But by the same account this should undermine Socrates' earlier claim that the beloved should by necessity love his erotic lover.

Having presumed that what is akin differs from what is like (combined with, what is akin is useful), Socrates suggests:

> Shall we also, then, posit that what is good is akin to everyone, and that what is bad is alien? Or else [shall we posit] that what is bad is akin to the bad; and that what is good is akin to the good; and that whatever is neither good nor bad is akin to whatever is neither good nor bad? (222c).

We have here two options, either the good is akin (while the bad is alien) to everyone, or that each (the good, the bad, and the intermediate) is akin to each (respectively). Why did the boys choose the second option and reject the first? Apparently they believe that the intermediate cannot be akin to the good. This is understandable since the entire premise that the good is loved because of what is bad was based on the assumption that the intermediate by itself does not love the good in itself. Moreover, since they have just assumed that what is alike and what is akin are not supposed to be the same thing, then this would explain to them the friendship between those intermediate beings. Yet we should note that nothing in this question indicates that Socrates himself rejects the first possibility. As such we should keep the first option open.

For now, however, we must address the implication of the second one. As Socrates informs the boys:

> And so . . . we have fallen back into those accounts concerning friendship [*philias*] which we rejected at first. For he who is unjust will be no less a friend [*philos*] to the unjust – as will he who is bad, to the bad – than he who is good, to the good. (222d)

Indeed Socrates did earlier reject the friendship among wicked/bad men. However, as we noted then, such rejection did not explain why one does see unjust/bad men having some form of friendly interaction with each other. Socrates here seems implicitly to acknowledge this. For his main contention here is not that the unjust/bad man cannot be a friend with his supposed kin,

as much as that they should regard this 'friendship' as equal to that between the good and his kin. But can this apparent friendship be explained by the unjust/bad man's supposed kinship with each other (while dismissing the importance of their likeness)? A deeper examination of this and of the previous argument (which Socrates refers to) in fact suggests the contrary. Socrates' mention of the unjust reminds us of the fundamental reason why the wicked supposedly cannot be a friend to the wicked: as friends they would both commit and both suffer injustice. But this, arguably, can only be if wickedness, in and of itself, was the only thing that should bring them together (which would also bring them apart). For it cannot be said that the wicked desires the wickedness of his friend, and similarly it cannot be said that the bad desires the badness of his friend. And as such, there cannot be kinship between the wicked and the wicked. Whenever they are possible, such friendship has to be based on some form of utility or mutual pleasure. For even the wicked must desire some benefit from his friend. But since the wicked cannot desire his friend for his own sake, then this must put this supposed friendship in the category of 'phantom friendship'. This should then open once again the possibility that the good is akin to everyone, while the bad is alien – that this is true to the nature of all things.

Socrates seems to re-open the first possibility, however not without some significant modifications:

> And what about this? If we declare what is good and what is akin to be the same, then isn't only he who is good a friend [*philos*] to the good? (222b)

As it is obvious, Socrates here does not speak of the good's kinship with everyone, only of that among the good. As such, Socrates eliminates the intermediate's kinship (thus friendship) with the good. Perhaps this is understandable if one wishes to distinguish the friendship between those

who are good from other types of friendships. Yet Socrates seems here to have gone from one extreme to another. That is, from everyone being a friend of his kin to the claim that only the good can be friends. In any case, Socrates having gained acceptance regarding this premise, continues: "But yet on this point, too, *we supposed* that we had refuted ourselves. Or don't you [plural] remember?" (222d). The boys answer that they remember. Socrates' wording of this question must suggest to us as well as to the boys that their 'supposition' might well have been mistaken. This is all the more significant since Socrates apparently was intending to make this the last point of his discussion with the young boys. Thus, perhaps Socrates is implicitly encouraging them, presuming they wished to investigate this question further.

However, for now he concludes:

> What, then, might we still make of the argument? Or is there clearly nothing? Well, in any case I want to count up all the things which have been mentioned, as those who are wise in the law courts do. For if neither the loved [*philoumenoi*] nor those who love [*philountes*], nor those who are like, nor those who are unlike, nor those who are good, nor those who are akin, nor as many other things as we have gone through – for I, at least, don't remember any more because of their multitude – if nothing among these is a friend [*philon*], I no longer know what to say. (222e)

As it is clear by his following statement to his listener(s), the ironic Socrates, though claiming that he did not know what to say, had apparently a good idea of what to do: "But as I said these things, I already had in mind to set in motion someone else among the older fellows" (223a). Whatever these plans are (or whoever this person is), fortune – which so far appeared to play a positive role in this dialogue (cf. 203a, 206d1-3, 207b1-5, 207d1-4, and 211a2) – now frustrates Socrates' plans. For suddenly, "like daemons", the attendants of Menexenus and Lysis appear, demanding that the boys should go home with them. The fact that those present attempt to resist the

attendants' wishes should be seen as a positive sign that some kind of friendly bond has developed among those gathered. However, as Socrates reports, since the attendants (who appeared drunk) "paid no heed to [them], but showed irritation and kept calling out none the less with somewhat foreign accent . . . [Socrates and his companions] were therefore defeated by them" (223a), thus breaking up the group. This final scene in the dialogue – of 'duty-bound' slaves breaking-up a friendly gathering – serves to remind us of an important reality regarding friendship which (strangely enough) is never examined by Socrates: in dealing with friendship one deals with a phenomena that exist within the political community. And as such it is both influenced and can potentially influence the political community. However, this should not mean that Socrates is impervious to this fact. After all he is the one who is narrating this dialogue. Rather, what this suggests is that for those who wish to re-examine Socrates' previous arguments, they must begin with this fact – that friends do not exist in isolation of the political community – in order to gain a fuller appreciation of the problem of friendship in the *Lysis*.[6] Moreover, this scene serves as a final reminder that perfect friendship, like so many of the good things desired in this life is subject to the forces of fortune.

Be that as it may, and despite Socrates supposed perplexity, he ends with what can be seen as a helpful note regarding friendship:

> Now, Lysis and Menexenus, we have become ridiculous – I, an old man, and you. For these fellows will say, as they go away, that we suppose we're one another's friends [*philoi*] – for I also put myself among you – but what he who is a friend [*philos*] is we have not yet been able to discover. (223b)

Obviously, only time can prove whether or not they are truly friends.

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[6] See, for example, our discussion of the second section of the third part.

Conclusion:

As is clear by now, our present analysis appears at its end no closer to discovering Socrates' own teachings about friendship than at its beginning. Part of the problem lies in Socrates' own confusing (and at sometimes outrageous) arguments. But that's not to say that our appreciation of the problem of friendship did not mature with the study (however limited) of this dialogue. And to that we shall now turn.

For the most part, our examination has focused on the young boys: on how and why they would give their peculiar answers to Socrates' questions. It seems appropriate, therefore, to end with the examination of the following question: how does this discussion affect Lysis' and Menexenus' friendship? There is the possibility that this discussion will have no impact whatsoever. That is, the young boys would go home, sleep, and wake-up the next morning thinking of nothing beyond the amusing time which, the day before, they spent with Socrates. And this, one suspects, would be the impression of many who read this dialogue: they might enjoy the 'perplexing' philosophical problems which it provides, but think that "there is clearly nothing" in it which would challenge their existing notions of what friendship is supposed to be. There is also the possibility (though slight) that after this discussion (because of it, that is) Lysis and Menexenus would no longer remain as close to each other as once they thought they were (cf. 206d5, 207c8-10, 212a1-8; and compare with 221e9-11). But if that happens, then we should not be quick to condemn Socrates as a 'corrupter'. Surely, any so-called friendship that cannot withstand an hour's examination is no great loss. However, if Lysis and Menexenus take their friendship seriously (if they are willing to *fight* for it, so to speak), then one could

hardly think of anything better than this challenge by Socrates to strengthen this friendship.

To appreciate this we, have to keep in mind that, although Socrates' surface arguments challenge the idea of genuine human friendship, when examined carefully these arguments by themselves do not prove that such friendship does not exist. And as argued, the way Socrates concludes the dialogue implicitly invites the boys to engage in just such an examination, and to do so by not taking their friendship for granted. And for this purpose, they have been given much to think about. But more importantly, Socrates' emphasis on the selfish motives that underlie common friendship must encourage each boy (as well as each one who carefully attends this conversation) to end with an honest self-examination. That is, to examine his own instinctive loves and hates and see how they impact on his own character: that is, on his own worthiness to be loved as a true friend.

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